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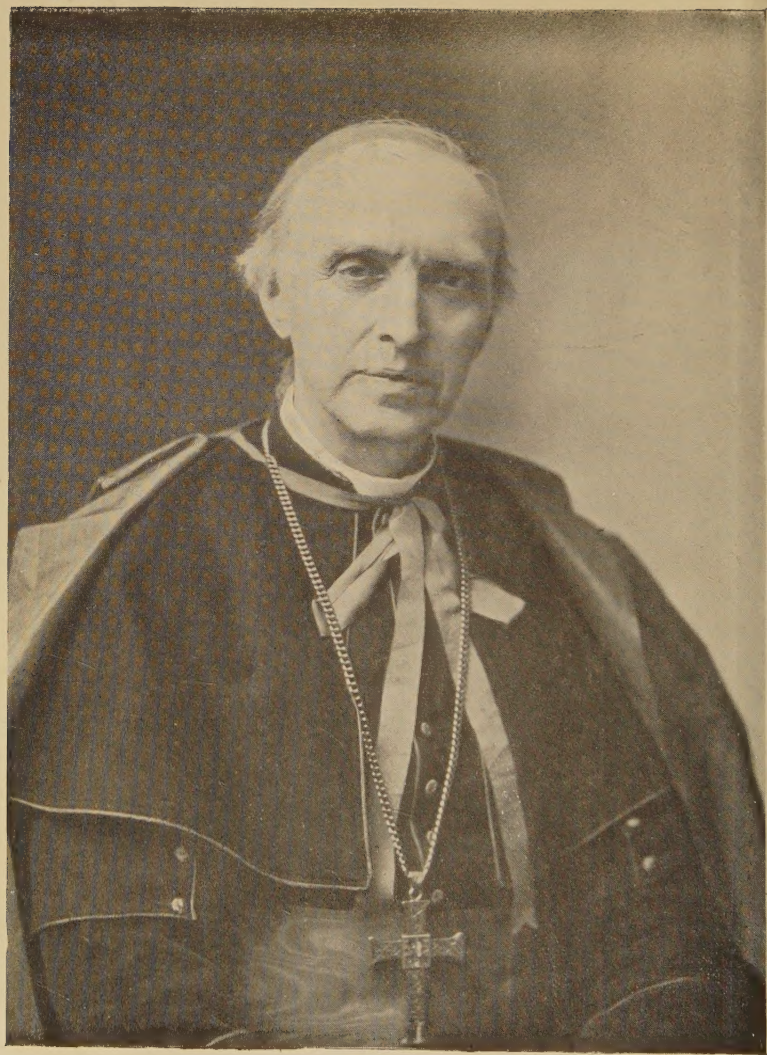
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CARDINAL MERCIER

Photo : Felici, Rome

THE LIFE OF
CARDINAL MERCIER
PRIMATE OF BELGIUM

By
HENRY LOUIS DUBLY

Awarded Le Prix Montyon of Literature by the French Academy

Translated from the French by
HERBERT WILSON

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PREFACE

MONSIEUR,

It is a bold undertaking to write the life of Cardinal Mercier, I know well. You are a writer by profession; you have published books which have not passed unnoticed; a literary critic and contributor to many reviews you have approached many subjects and appraised many men. These are titles worthy of consideration.

But the life of Cardinal Mercier, though essentially one in its very basis, was so many sided in its aspects; so many problems, and those by no means the least arduous, pre-occupied him! Philosophy, theology, social, national and political questions—what subject was there he did not consider from the outside, and deeply fathom from within? Can the soul of the priest, the Bishop, the mystic, be easily penetrated by a lay mind which has never lived the life of a man of the Church?

On the other hand, how many fine pages have already appeared on the great Cardinal who incarnated the Catholic mind and conscience in the very grave hours through which it passed—pages still glowing with the nearness of the event, with admiration and tender affection, with sorrow that has not yet ceased to shed its tears!

People will say these were only impressions, not critical biography. Has the moment for a critical biography yet come? Have all the documents appeared,

and can they see the light of day? Have all the circumstances in which the Cardinal lived his life been fully revealed? Can they be unreservedly revealed when so many men are yet living for whom discretion and respect should be shown, so many interests which should be judiciously treated?

There should be no hasty first attempt, no critical study for the use of posterity: this objection haunted me, Monsieur, when you did me the honour to request from me a testimony in the form of a prefatory letter.

And have I not myself for twelve years written on so many occasions everything of a personal nature that I could about one who surpassed us all and will remain our model? Should I therefore repeat myself, or beg to be excused?

After all, what would be the good of writing an *a priori* and carefully considered discourse on what might or might not be the nature of your forthcoming book you announce to me? The wisest course would be to wait and see; I have waited, I have seen. I do not regret waiting, for what I have seen has given me pleasure, and my doubts have vanished.

You have examined and meditated on every page what was essential to make your work a serious one; to-day your *Cardinal Mercier* is realised before us, established without fear of challenge as a true portrait.

It is not my place to follow you in detail, and I know not whether some punctilious critic may not raise this or that objection to some of your statements.

But I am certain of this, namely, that the further your narrative unrolled itself before my eyes I kept on repeating to myself, quietly but often: "Here we have the man himself in very truth, the philosopher, the priest, the hero, the saint to whom is rising the fervent admiration of the world—the man I had the happiness of knowing and loving. His biographer has understood and appreciated him; he has the two-fold gift of

the historian." There is something else I know, and that is that sometimes tears of veneration and closest sympathy came to my eyes; a man must know how to draw them forth; you possess that gift.

You know Belgium, Monsieur, better than most men; you live at her gates, have often visited her; you know her tendencies, her achievements, her difficulties. You have taken pains to add to your general information on your subject by making investigations on the spot at Braine-l'Alleud, Malines, Brussels and elsewhere. And thus you have had the opportunity of collecting small facts, significant details and first-hand impressions, all of which throw light on certain points of psychology and even on difficult problems in which strangers often lose themselves.

This is why one can discern in your work that living note engendering the emotion I have not been able to restrain.

It is a salutary emotion which I hope will be shared by many, and will be, I am sure. Vainly, since the death of Cardinal Mercier, do the weeks and months fly by; his *prestige* remains, fascinating the most divergent, the most opposite, minds. In the midst of so much that is ugly the spectacle of which is distressing, how beautiful is this lasting attraction felt by men's minds for one who in the harmony of doctrine and the moral principles of the Gospel represented truth and virtue!

Of such a man, who was an honour to humanity, you set out to draw a comprehensive and living portrait; you have succeeded, and your book merits success; may Providence assure this, and bring it on the wings of angels to souls of goodwill to whom it will be a solace!

† ALFRED BAUDRILLART,

Bishop of Himeria,

Member of the French Academy.

Ecce Sacerdos magnus, qui in diebus suis placuit Deo, et inventus est justus: et in tempore iracundiae factus est reconciliatio. Non est inventus similis illi, qui conservavit legem Excelsi; Ideo jure-jurando fecit illum Dominus crescere in plebem suam. Benedictionem omnium gentium dedit illi, et testamentum suum confirmavit super caput ejus. Agnovit eum in benedictionibus suis; conservavit illi misericordiam suam, et invenit gratiam coram oculis Domini. Magnificavit eum in conspectu regum, et dedit illi coronam gloriae. Statuit illi testamentum aeternum, et dedit illi sacerdotium magnum, et beatificavit illum in gloria; fungi sacerdotio, et habere laudem in nomine ipsius, et offerre illi incensum dignum in odorem suavitatis.

Behold, a great priest, who in his days pleased God, and was found just; and in the time of wrath was made a reconciliation. There was not any found like unto him, who kept the law of the Most High. Therefore by an oath the Lord made him increase among his people. He gave him the blessing of all nations, and confirmed his covenant upon his head. He acknowledged him in his blessing: he preserved for him his mercy; and he found grace before the eyes of the Lord. He glorified him in the sight of kings, and gave him a crown of glory. He made an everlasting covenant with him; and gave him a great priesthood; and made him blessed in glory, to execute the office of the priesthood, and to have praise in his name, and to offer him worthy incense for an odour of sweetness.

INTRODUCTION

A writer concluded a moving article on the morrow of the death of Cardinal Mercier, by expressing this wish :

“ With a full heart we utter the hope that soon we may be allowed to know the life, or rather the inner soul, of one who exercised so deep and so fruitful an attraction on his own times and over distant lands. Awaited impatiently, such a book will realise the beautiful programme drawn up by the Cardinal himself : ‘ My intention, my constant desire, and my profound aspiration has always been to lift up and elevate morally those whom I have been able to influence.’ ”

We were captivated by the harmonious beauty of this privileged existence. Hence, to make others share our personal impressions there was only one thing to be done—to take up our pen. It was only when we entered further into the matter that we realised the temerity of the undertaking. Saint Beuve said that it was necessary to dip into the inkpot of any author one wished to depict. In our own case this is an ideal difficult of realisation. What writer could easily understand the extraordinarily rich and varied personality of the Archbishop of Malines? At any rate it was deserving of an attempt to piece it together. Wherever possible we have left the Cardinal to use his own words. Letters and unpublished communications have often cleared up obscure points of detail. We cannot give the names of all those who have aided us in this task, or of those who,

with touching readiness, have furnished us with indispensable information of their own accord. We are aware that certain documents are wanting, but we can very legitimately believe that their absence does not constitute any *lacunae* in our presentation nor any inaccuracy in the facts set out. When the time comes for the historian to utilise them he will discover nothing to contradict the conclusions arrived at in this work.

We have deliberately rejected all information coming to us second hand, and have strictly confined ourselves to accepting only direct testimony. Gratitude makes it a duty for us to mention *La Libre Belgique* and the *Vingtième Siècle* from the files of which we have drawn many valuable facts. We should also mention the official collection of letters that passed between the Occupying Power and the Cardinal, and reports of interviews, published under the authority of the latter by Monsieur F. Mayence.¹ Of these we have given an abridged *résumé* based on the original documents.

Our ambition is to present a living portrait of his personality sufficient to make him loved and admired. In the attainment of this end we desire not only to be of service to the glorious Catholic Church, to which we are proud to belong, but also to set forth an ideal of beauty and grandeur to which all humanity dimly aspires.

A celebrated literary critic said: "The closer we get to men of real distinction and of great mind the more surely we discover what is the source": and this fact emerges clearly from the study of a life such as the Cardinal's.

A priest is dead, and all the powers of this world come to offer homage to his mortal remains, to honour his memory.

This priest lived as a Saint, thought as a man of wisdom and devoted his life to Christian ideals. His motto was, "Apôtre de Jésus Christ." He made it his

¹ Dewit, Publisher, Brussels.

life's programme, and realised it throughout a beautiful existence without one moment of faltering. The war broke out. This man of peace became the judge in face of the oppressors whose despotic rule was overwhelming the Belgian people.

Elevated to a privileged position, Cardinal Mercier will take the place which is his by right in the annals of history—the man whom even an enemy of the Church proclaimed to be “the concentrating point of the common conscience of humanity.” Few men have possessed a like accumulation of virtues and qualities. As a rule those who are qualified to be called great men merit the title only from one side of their character. In him, however, were united and harmonised the gifts of intellect, sensibility and will.

A profound philosopher and theologian, he knew how to keep in constant contact with reality. Contemplation and speculation in him were closely associated with action. In the light derived from St. Thomas he harmonised the old antinomy, and applied the precept *revelare contemplata*.

From his life and work Cardinal Mercier will remain one of those men of whom Carlyle said that the memory of their actions enhances the distinction of life by giving to it its full value, compels other men to become more fully aware of the nobility of their destiny, is able to arouse courage in the hours of weariness, to give confidence in times of doubt and distress, and to make everyone feel the greatest pride in being a man.

The Cardinal of Malines leaves to the whole world a legacy of ideals, acts and virtues, forming one of the most heroic personalities of our times, with no shadow of the artificial.

And this heroism springs from such deep sources that it has nothing to fear from the inquisitive examination of the vulgar crowd, nor from the minute investigations of the historian; the aureole surrounding the brow of

Cardinal Mercier is like one of those to be found on holy faces, statues, or pictures, in front of which the admiration of the faithful pauses, moved; the passing years do not dim their lives, and from generation to generation, with a joy that has nothing transient nor fictitious about it, men recall the good words and the good actions of those venerable souls.

For long will he enjoy this living reality which, owing nothing to the ephemeral enthusiasm of passing opinion, or to the press, is surely safeguarded from any change.

St. Paul was right when, contemplating with his eagle glance the march of humanity, he said: "The world is but a passing show of actors on the stage of a theatre."

And what has become of all those who have disappeared from the centuries rolled by? They have had their little moment of history, either ignored, either more, or less, famous. They worked, played and thought their thoughts; their passions provoked wars, their interests sometimes clashed, sometimes harmonised. What of all this remains? Cardinal Mercier will endure, and we shall see the reason.

We are going to follow, by the two-fold light of facts and ideas, the development of this "character", and the circumstances that favoured the outstanding merit of this genius.

Let us preserve his memory and the souvenirs of his presence among us, and let us never forget that he taught our divided and undefended generation what is true greatness.

A book is never finished, but if it be well done it will form the starting point of a continuous new creation, and a taking-off ground for reflections and meditations which will go beyond it. We wish this grace for the Catholics of all countries, and for all men who, although they may not share our faith, have nevertheless a pure heart and upright will.

PART I

PHILOSOPHER AND PRIEST

THE LIFE OF CARDINAL MERCIER

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

Birth and parentage. His early education. The University of Louvain. His call to the study of Thomism. Ordained priest. Abbé Mercier as Professor at Malines. His influence over the students. Appointed Vice-Regent of the Pope's College at Louvain by Pope Leo XIII.

CARDINAL MERCIER sprang from good and old stock which had its roots in French soil. It belonged to the "bourgeoisie" of the Ile de France and among its numbers it counted a writer who left behind a curious *Tableau de Paris*. For nearly three hundred years—certainly from the year 1640—the family had been settled in Belgium. From that date onwards the Merciers are found definitely established as farmers on fertile lands in Brabant, first at Nivelles, and afterwards at Braine-l'Alleud in which latter place the Cardinal's grandfather filled the office of Mayor for thirty-four years.

He lived in a large country house which will be remembered in history, for it was there Désiré Joseph Mercier was born; it was called the "Château du Castegier" which has been since transformed into a house devoted to religious work and retreats, and has

been placed under the patronage of the Cardinal in order to perpetuate the memory of the most illustrious son of Braine-l'Alleud.

Paul Léon Mercier, the Cardinal's father, was possessed of varied aptitudes; mathematics, art and literature attracted him in turn. He left behind him some excellent family portraits which are evidence of a talented brush. In 1830 he experienced the thrills of patriotism; on the first sounding of the tocsin of the Revolution he hastened to Brussels to take up arms with three of his relatives. Thus the name Mercier figures four times on the roll of Braine volunteers who exposed their lives for the cause of national independence.

In one of the most highly considered families in the district Paul Léon found his predestined heart's choice, Barbe Croquet, who has remained in veneration by the countryside where she was gracefully called "la Sainte Madame Barbe." Out of the nine children with which her motherhood was honoured two died in their cradle, and the premature death of their father left seven fatherless children to the care of his widow.

Désiré Joseph was born on the 21st November, 1851, under the smiling auspices of the Virgin whose church at Braine l'Alleud was celebrating on that day the Feast of the Presentation in the Temple. This was the same Brabant village on which the Belgian Division, forming the extreme right of Wellington's army, was based on the morning of the 18th June, 1815. There his childhood was passed overlooking the dreary plains haunted by memories of that great event, in the shadow of the proud Lion of Waterloo.

The child was profoundly influenced by the example of his mother, an exceptionally devout Christian, who was in advance of her times by the practice of daily communion, and was like a saint in works of charity; she gave to the Lord three daughters in the religious life, and her son Désiré Joseph for the service of the

altar, fully convinced that she could not fully satisfy the noble ambitions of her heart in any better way.

What is the meaning of a Christian education? It consists in taking a child in hand, studying his physical, moral and intellectual aptitudes, and harmoniously developing them in the most thorough manner. To educate is to study the capacities for good possessed by each one of us. In order to extract from this germ, which is the soul of the child, all that it can give, and to cause it to evolve to the fulness of its development, the instructor must sort out the complex of its growing organs and ascertain the play of their functioning. This admirable mother had the capacity for doing this.

The position of the family was not a brilliant one, their father's distillery had to be sold, but they put their trust in God who gives their nourishment to the young birds.

Désiré could have opened out for himself an honourable path to an administrative career, to which the position of his uncle Adolphe, who was Registrar at Hasselt, and that of his uncle Siméon, Director General at the Ministry of Finance, and that of his cousin Edouard Mercier, three times a Minister, seemed to point. But in answer to a higher call other influences were able to exercise their attraction. These came from Abbé Anthyme Charlier, his mother's half-brother, Dean of Virginal and an ecclesiastic of signal worth, who, later on was to initiate his nephew during his vacations in the sacred work of the ministry; and, in a special degree, from Mgr. Adrien Joseph Croquet, his mother's brother, who for the space of forty years was a Missionary among the Red Indians and was revered by the natives under the grand title of "the Saint of Oregon." In any case, from the moment that the mysterious star of vocation rose in his soul the young man followed it with joyful eagerness; he would be a priest in order to be an apostle.

All through his career Providence was to station men who would become messengers of grace. The first of these was the Abbé Oliviers, at that time the Vicaire of Braine l'Alleud. He was his first spiritual guide and his first instructor in the elements of Latin, and when he was appointed Vicaire at Notre Dame-au-delà-de-la-Dyle, in November 1863, he brought his pupil to the day school at Saint Rombaut. And so the young Walloon, who was boarded at the house of the Demoiselles Rydams, was under the necessity of learning Flemish, a knowledge of which was to become indispensable to him later on.

As a subject of the Archdiocese he received his entire education at Malines; he studied his humanities at the College of Saint Rombaud, his philosophy at the Petit Séminaire; and his theology at the Grand Séminaire.

At a later date, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation, when recalling his school days, he said: "I owe to the education I received here all that I have since become. . . . I hold in respect the memory of my former tutors, MM. Robert, La Force, and Pierærts. Robert taught us to obey, La Force taught us to work and to be willing, Pierærts taught us to dare."

During the vacations he returned to Braine, and became a "Mameluke," the name given by the free-thinkers to the members of the Association of St. Francis Xavier which grouped together the Catholic activities of the parish.

"Those of you," he continued, "over forty or fifty years old will readily call to mind those happy evenings after Vespers and Benediction, when we strolled off to the parish room.

"The parish room, or 'local' as we called it, was the house placed every Sunday by the generosity of the venerable Demoiselle Waroquez at the disposal of the Xaverians.

“From that time onwards the Xaverians occupied a place apart from the general life of the village.

“When unmannerly people at Louvain shouted at our Catholic students ‘à bas la calotte’, the latter refrained from answering them back, and to prove to their insulters that for some individuals abuse becomes a compliment, they turned the intentionally wounding phrase into a title of honour and replied: ‘Yes, here we are, the Calottins! Vive la calotte!’ There were also people between 1865 and 1870 who hoped to annoy the Xaverians amongst us by nicknaming them ‘Mamelukes,’ but our brave Christian workers took up the gauntlet and called themselves ‘Mamelukes’ of their own accord.

“The ‘Mamelukes’ betook themselves, therefore, every Sunday to the ‘local,’ and it was fine to see working men and their employers, old and young, clergy and laymen walking down the Estrée road side by side in brotherly friendship and going in to spend a few peaceable hours playing nine-pins, billiards and cards, clinking glasses over a few good draughts of beer, and entering competitions at piquet or nine-pins for a prize—sometimes a rabbit and sometimes a couple of pigeons. You will remember, my friends, how Petit, Wadin, Tilmon, Oliviers, de Neunheuser, Godefroid, Draguet and many others joined in with our working population! And may I say that one of the most cherished recollections of my school years is the joy of having competed for rabbits during my vacations with our dear working men of Braine, and going home in the evening in friendly chat with them.”

The Philosophy course was to exercise a decisive influence on the trend of his thought. It could not escape the clear intuition of the young man that the condemnation of the system of ontology, following on that of traditionalism, was very disconcerting to his Professor, and on the other hand, Providence willed that from that

moment he should receive his first revelation of another system of philosophy, Thomism, called to replace the theories condemned by Rome, and opening out to him a vast, fruitful and comprehensive synthesis.

The following is a description by M. Georges Goyau of the University of Louvain at the time when the young Abbé was about to enter into close contact with it :

“ The studies in Philosophy, as carried on at that time at Louvain, did not put the students in possession of a system of philosophy ; at the most they suggested the need of having one, and this need was accompanied and tinged by a certain amount of apprehension.

“ For Louvain in the middle of the nineteenth century had a school of philosophy authentically native to it, and really original in a certain way, and Louvain was ill at ease ; this particular school of thought had had its troubles. Of these, Professor Ubaghs, a very serious and holy man, had been the chief one. Rendered anxious over the assaults on the faith made by rationalism, he had felt some pleasure—a pleasure of revenge—at seeing men like Lamennais, Bonald, and Bautain humiliating mere reason, and making tradition the sole or principal source of moral and metaphysical truths. But it was not pleasing to Rome that the human reason should be despised to an excessive extent. In spite of the peril of rationalism, Rome impartially and generously stood up for human reason against the attacks made by traditionalism. Ubaghs then took up the cudgels again, but more discreetly ; he upheld Bonald’s theory that the individual reason, physically dependent on society and the Revolution, necessarily took from them its first certitudes on God, on the soul, and on moral obligations ; but he added—as a concession to the Holy See—that once provided with this initial knowledge by borrowing it from these sources, reason was capable of proving to herself the legitimacy of the faith she professed. This concession did not satisfy Rome ; a warn-

ing in 1843, and a condemnation in 1864, cut short the hopes aroused by the Ubaghs school; Louvain had flattered herself that she was making an offer to Rome of weapons against the human reason: Rome broke them up. And as sometimes happens after these catastrophes to schools of thought, a generation of philosophers had succeeded who were a little afraid of having any system, or even a reputation of having one: they were good technicians in debate, but by no means good builders.

“One day when the young Abbé Mercier had been invited to submit a refutation of Positivism he underwent one of those complete and sudden changes of opinion which often lead the pupil to pass beyond the professor, and, unable to resist it, came to the conclusion not only of the necessity of transcendental notions, but of the urgency of building up a duly ordered and duly synthetic system. His fervour for St. Thomas and the masterly work on the Thomist by Kleutgen, the Jesuit, kept increasing, and this *tête-à-tête* with the aged professor was faithfully followed up when he became director of philosophical studies in the Petit Séminaire at Malines in October, 1877. At that date he had no thought that he was destined to set in motion a vast Thomist movement; he was just as modest as his instructors at Louvain. He made it a rule—and he always kept to it—never to anticipate by any personal impetuosity the moment when his activities should be sufficiently ripe to be gathered by God; he was too much a man of duty to be a man of one idea.”

Questionings inevitably surged up in the alert mind of the young student, but he put off replying to them, for the time had come for him to enter on his theological studies. To these he devoted himself for three years at the Seminary, and then for another four years immersed himself in the sacred science at the University of Louvain, where he passed the grades of bachelor and

licentiate in theology. His thesis for the Licentiate, delivered in July, 1877, was exceptionally brilliant.

He received the priesthood during his first academical year. Appointed at Christmas, 1873, by Mgr. Jacobs, President of the College of Pope Adrian VI, to the functions of Vice-Regent, and not eligible, owing to his extreme youth, for the regular ordinations, he was ordained on Holy Saturday, 1874, at the Palace of the Nunciature in Brussels by His Eminence Mgr. Cattani, the Nuncio, Archbishop of Ancyra.

Next day, Easter Sunday, the young priest ascended for the first time the altar steps of his beloved parish church in Braine-l'Alleud, but this radiant occasion for him was shrouded in a veil of sadness, for his venerable mother was unable to be present at the ceremony owing to an attack of congestion.

In October, 1877, Abbé Mercier was appointed by the diocesan authority to teach Philosophy in the Petit Séminaire at Malines, and later on was entrusted with the spiritual direction of the young church students on the departure of Mgr. Du Rousseaux, who had been made Bishop of Tournai.

Breaking definitely with the vague eclectic spirituality into which instruction had drifted after the downfall of the systems which had been condemned, the young professor introduced into his course the study of scholastic philosophy, thus anticipating unknowingly the great mission held in store for him in the future. Right from the outset Abbé Mercier showed himself a born teacher by his lucidity in expounding, the warm enthusiasm of his arguments, and the possession of a direct and lively appeal in his choice of words which compelled, as it were, the assent of his pupils, and aroused in their minds a strong and ever renewed interest in even the most arid subjects.

During the last two years of his professorship at Malines the souls of the young students destined for

the priesthood became the object of his most ardent solicitude. He felt in himself a supernatural attraction for this delicate mission, and in truth he possessed special aptitudes and graces to be successful in it. Priests who passed through his hands still bear their imprint. The principles of spiritual life he then began to inculcate were set forth at a later date with equal depth and unction in a little book, written long before it was published, called *A mes Séminaristes*, an undoubted masterpiece which has been spread throughout the world in innumerable succeeding editions and very many translations into other languages.

As Vice-Regent at the Pope's College at Louvain he had to superintend the lay students; he exercised an affectionate care over them, and no one will ever know the wonderful fruit it bore. He was a professor at Malines and spiritual director of the seminarists at the same time. He mastered the special importance of his duties under their every aspect.

"Universities are levers whereby to raise the intellectual world.

"The fact that a nation possesses an *élite* of seekers after knowledge who disinterestedly and without any concern for immediate results of utility to economics, morality, or religion, urge on their intellectual vision to penetrate to the utmost limits of which they are capable, and who, with a serene patience which has been called the foundation of genius, submit the ultimate consequence of fresh truths which they believe they have found out to their verification by documents, observation and experiments—this mere fact alone raises the level of all sections of that nation. And when this *élite* is born of a spontaneous enthusiasm for liberty, is sustained by its own efforts, and sometimes sacrifices for its ideals offers bringing widespread renown, the beneficent influence of a University assumes the proportions of a social apostolate. Knowledge instructs,

enlightens and guides; art impresses its character, charms and delights. If you find the bulk of a nation becoming too indifferent to elevated subjects, and too easily contenting itself with what is purely material—with what you term *bourgeois* or Philistine—is this not due to the fact that you have not quite understood the rôle played by the arts, I do not say at school, but at the University?

“ Every well-educated man will be himself an educator to-morrow. It will fall upon him to educate his family, a children’s class, a group of fellow citizens, a gathering of the faithful. The process of education applies to all the faculties of the pupil, particularly to his will. It is an art which everyone agrees and repeats is one of exceptional delicacy. Do we sufficiently thoroughly and universally teach this art? We possess to-day a scientific basis provided by the harmonious co-operation of physiology, psychology and ethics: would it not be wiser to ground more firmly on these foundations the educative capacities not only of the professor, but also of the father of a family, the man of action, the doctor and the moralist? ”

When, in 1425, the Duc de Brabant acting as the mouthpiece of the Provosts and Deans of the Chapter of St. Pierre, and of the Burgomaster and Aldermen of the town, asked that Louvain might have the honour of possessing within its walls a “ Studium General ”, he promised Pope Martin V that those who should devote themselves to the study of the sciences and of wisdom would have only one end in view, namely to imbibe for themselves and for others the elements of true progress, *ut inibi disciplinae atque sapientiae se studiis exercentes sibi et aliis meliores esse valeant.*

The Pope, in acceding to their wish, reminded them of their engagements in his Bull authorising the foundation. This end the Cardinal always had greatly at heart to follow as closely as possible.

It has been often said that the purpose of the classical humanities is not to furnish nor enrich, but to form.

In like manner the lofty intention of higher education is to form a few gifted minds who, with no directly personal concern, will take up the study of nature or conscious knowledge in quest of more comprehensive syntheses, and endeavour to open up new channels for their pupils who will to-morrow become the familiar exponents of their methods, their disappointments and their discoveries, and in this way will keep alive the sacred fire of disinterested research within the bosom of an aristocracy of intellect.

"The public, made up of practical and ordinary minded men, will consider them as dreamers. So much the worse for practical and ordinary minded men.

"Civilisation has need of 'dreamers', just as it needs poets and artists, and derives support from its heroes and saints."

As an answer to the material pre-occupations of the English positivists, Taine wrote that three-quarters of mankind consider synthetic conceptions to be mere idle speculation. So much the worse for them, he added. Why does any nation or century exist if not to form them? A man is only completely a man by doing so. If an inhabitant of another planet were to come down and ask us to what state our kind has arrived we should have to show him the five or six salient ideas we have of mind and the world; these would give him the measure of our intelligence.

Behind us, in the words of Bossuet, lies "a continuous recruiting of humanity" famished with the desire of believing because, in point of fact, without belief or understanding—in a word, without certitude—it is impossible to do well.

To his students Abbé Mercier said: "You will not form sentimental men, destined to become the imme-

diate prey of 'dilettantism', mere lost force as regards the progress of civilisation; you will inspire in your pupils the cult of truth for its own sake, the disinterested cult of objective truth, no matter in what domain—scientific, historical, philosophical—it may propose itself to the meditation of the thinker. Seek humbly in the Divine Master's footsteps, seek verities before all else, luminous convictions, and vigour of mind; the rest, that is, morality, manly resolutions, the tempering of character will come in addition.

"Dear friends, first be faithful to your professional studies. But there is a profession other than that of doctor, lawyer, or engineer—and, to quote the gifted French writer, Ernest Lavisse, it is not overstocked—it is the profession of 'man.' Mingle your aptitudes, your knowledge, your vocations. Interchange with each other your notions on your studies, on methods, on scientific happenings; it is the best way to guard against preserving a spirit of one special study only and of one profession."

Cardinal Gibbons had no hesitation in saying that after a knowledge of Scripture there is nothing more necessary to a priest than a knowledge of men whom he is called upon to save.

Abbé Mercier knew how to instil this knowledge all the better from his being able to inspire confidence and friendship. The hearts and minds of his students had only to open themselves to him to be won.

They appreciated his learning held in by the reins of his judgment and marshalled in good taste. Sainte Beuve remarked of Thiers: "He talks to you in the evening of what he learnt in the morning. He is one of those people who cannot keep their wine in the bottle, and in consequence one notices that its character possesses neither body nor bouquet." The Abbé, on the contrary, even when he was exhibiting most largely the treasury of his knowledge and was surprising the

learned world, always appeared to be giving only the small change out of it.

In spite of the speculative theories in which he was immersed, he preserved a young mind and a simplicity in approaching them which won for him the name of "le grand sympathique" from the young students of law, literature and medicine. He recommended them to be light-hearted :

"Be lively and full of enthusiasm; be light-hearted, and by that I mean with a genuine light-heartedness which is the natural expansiveness of an untroubled conscience. Gaiety becomes your time of life, and I well know that it is almost superfluous to recommend it to young people, and that I run the risk of making you smile by saying: 'Don't be gloomy!' However, I should like to remark that good spirits are not only a natural disposition and a spontaneous condition of mind, but that in great measure they proceed from the will."

His success was largely due to an intuition of the proper methods by which to attain the end he had clearly before him. The possession of this quality was rarer in his time than in our own.

"How many times when I was at the Catholic University of Louvain did I not come back after listening to certain special preachers with my mind empty and my heart disappointed! The authorities were accustomed to engage preachers of renown twice a year, at Advent and during Lent. What kind of sermons were they for young men, Christian certainly, but exposed in an atmosphere of profane studies to the impulses of the passions and pride natural to their age of twenty, to the possibilities of forgetting the faith of their baptism and family traditions? More often than not they preached about the proofs of the existence of God, the foundations of the natural moral law, the immortality of the soul, and a few notions on evolution,

a few practical exhortations on self-respect and avoiding occasions of sin, now and then giving proofs of the Divinity of Christ and delivering conferences on apologetics; but of the revealed Mystery, of the true God and Christ whom He sent to us, of all this real living matter which in our Lord's words, is eternal life, nothing or next to nothing."

Whatever office the ecclesiastical authorities entrusted to him, he was always to exhibit that clear-seeing mind which dominates other intelligences, enlightens, and leads them straight to the point aimed at.

He was whole-heartedly devoting himself to carrying out these duties which accorded so well with his natural tastes when suddenly the course of his even life was interrupted by an unusual mission. He was ordered to leave Malines and return to Louvain to inaugurate the teaching of Thomism by command of Leo XIII.

CHAPTER II

THE PHILOSOPHER

Action of Pope Leo XIII in promoting the study of St. Thomas Aquinas. Review of the Philosophic systems in vogue from the Middle Ages up to the nineteenth century. The Professor of Philosophy at Louvain. His immense success as a teacher. Difficulties at the outset. Mgr. Mercier's writings. Kant's false deductions and their baneful results. The Immanentists. The Neo-Scholasticism. Narrow escape of Mgr. Mercier from being shot by a sentry at Burgos.

FROM the outset of his Pontificate Pope Leo XIII had conceived an idea in accordance with his genius: to save the realm of the intelligence from anarchy, to unify it by a system of philosophy sufficiently vast and compelling to reconstitute authoritatively all human knowledge, and to search for the secret of this bold and fruitful synthesis at the hands of that incomparable master, St. Thomas Aquinas, who had realised it for his epoch.

At the death of Pius IX men's minds were seeking for some way by which to reconcile traditional teaching with the progress of science. Some took their inspiration from Descartes, Schelling, and Hegel; others, falling into the opposite extreme, affected purely and simply to suppress the reason.

In face of this confusion of systems, Leo XIII, in his Encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, of August 4th, 1879, proclaimed the necessity of building up on their ruins the Thomist philosophy, which offered a quarry which had been barely worked; he demanded its restoration and urged upon all teachers "to break this life-giving and strong bread for their pupils."

Acting with his habitual decision, the Holy Father, by Brief, dated December 25th, 1880, requested the Belgian Bishops to create at the University of Louvain a chair of Thomistic Philosophy open to all students. In order to attach faith to such an undertaking as to bring back the thought of the nineteenth century to the Church by the path of scholastic philosophy, was it not asking men to ignore the world of reality and to live in a stubborn dream apart from the thought of our day? "Romantics had found amusement in the picturesque souvenirs of the Middle Ages; they had discovered in them matter for gloomy or truculent poetry in the surroundings of the theatre or in the decorations of the salon; but it was a far cry from this point of view to drawing from the shades of the thirteenth century ideas capable of deserving the attention not alone of the fanciful, but also of seriously minded men. According to the historians of Philosophy, between the decline of antiquity and the dawn of the Renaissance human thought, plunged in barbarism, and the slave of dogma, had not yet emerged from a profound sleep. Any thinking, worthy of the name, began with Descartes."

Besides, in the middle of the nineteenth century, philosophy of every kind appeared to be discredited. After the theological dreams of its childhood and the metaphysical verbiage of its youth, had not the human mind reached the ripe age at which henceforth only the precise relations existing between ascertained facts as discovered by positive science could demand its ad-

hesion? It was quite true, the Encyclical serenely declared, that scholasticism could settle down comfortably with the science of nature; it was even anxious to give the latter proper direction. One might be fairly certain that if scholasticism since the days of Galileo had sunk into contempt, it was precisely from having opposed abstract formulæ to the progress made by positive discoveries. Was it not a two-fold impossible task to revive these dead doctrines and to bring them into relation with the latest results of the present current of thought and experience, which had only been set in motion after thrusting them back into obscurity?

Faced with the carrying into effect of this foundation, which appeared to them to be beyond the financial capacity of the University and to be little in harmony with the prevailing utilitarian mentality, the Bishops were not able all at once, without some hesitation, to accede to the wishes of the reforming Pope. Finally, in July, 1882, their consent was fully given, and the name of Abbé Mercier, proposed for their choice by the Rector, Mgr. Pieraerts, to take charge of the course of studies to be instituted, secured the votes of Cardinal Deschamps and his colleagues.

Having been Nuncio in Belgium when only Mgr. Joachim Pecci, Leo XIII had been a close observer of the University of Louvain, and had been able to appreciate its intelligent work. Endowed with the most varied learning in the realm of human knowledge, and placed in the centre of modern civilisation, it offered the advantages of uniting in the same institution the light derived from the researches made into every domain of thought. Firmly convinced of the benefits proceeding from the mutual exploration of Christian thought and scientific life, Leo XIII quite naturally remembered the University of Louvain when he decided to realise his dream of the restoration of scholasticism.

Canon Mercier did not wait for his appointment, but went to Rome to see Leo XIII without delay. It must have been an interview of unusual interest that took place between that great Pope of modern times and the young professor who was one day to become the illustrious Primate of Belgium. Leo XIII was an exacting master; his demands were on a level with his genius and also with the view he held of the grandeur and *prestige* of the Church. This time, however, he was to be satisfied. Like the Pope, the young professor believed generously in humanity, reason, and science. He loved the age in which he lived. Like Leo XIII he desired to bring together this science and this age with the Church and with Christ. Instead of holding to a literal and narrow interpretation of the Pope's intentions he thoroughly understood their underlying spirit; he was to bring to their realisation a breadth of view which was quite personal to himself and was to end in rendering it all the more faithful in that it was more personal and less servile.

At Malines, Abbé Mercier had realised the solid good sense of this doctrine, at once so serene and so positive, which climbed the highest summits of things divine without ever losing contact with tangible realities, nor casting off for one moment the rigorous chain of logical reasoning. Nevertheless he was aware that in order to interest circles of thought accustomed to concepts of an altogether different kind, with these ideas of the thirteenth century, it was necessary to bring them into contact with the thought of the nineteenth century. He had studied deeply the systems of modern philosophy, especially the theories of Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte, but judging himself to be only moderately posted in the matter of scientific research, he attended as a simple student the courses given by the scientists of the time. Doctor Mercier, in a long black overcoat, was to be seen attending Charcot's clinic, which was

then very much the vogue. He followed the lectures given by the exponents of the progress being made in physiology, chemistry, and mathematics. He was a spectator at the experiments of the great neurologist, Van Gebruchten; of Louis Henry, the chemist; of de Harley, the linguist; and of Van Benedey, the biologist.

Very soon his solid ideological and logical foundation discovered the errors, begging of principles, sophistry and deadlocks—all the insufficiencies, alas! in the philosophic spirit of modern experimentalists.

“Throughout my professorial career,” he wrote, “the intensity of which I was the daily witness, the activity manifested everywhere at Louvain in the fields of science, history, law, philosophy and theology, unceasingly stimulated me; the undisturbed faith which in all these workers in the realm of thought was so simply allied with the loyal and determined cult of learning, preserved my mind in calm serenity. I was astonished, and still am, at yet finding here and there men who are persuaded that we have to do violence to ourselves to be, and to remain, at one and the same time, servants of science and of the Catholic faith.”

Charles Maurras sums up the eminent services rendered by Mgr. Mercier as a philosopher, in the following words:

“On a higher plane, and from a more remote point of view, does he not appear as the interpreter and servant of a certain philosophy, *perennis quaedam philosophia*, the enduring rôle of which has been to put, or to restore, ideas and things in their proper place? So many amazing systems, so many very local and very original philosophies had taught our contemporaries no longer to understand, appraise or classify what fell to the cognisance of the senses! Such a host of ideas had become the fashion, which instead of shedding forth the white light disclosing the secrets of things, gave

forth colours destined to deceive thought and distort the right view! He taught us truths enabling us to go straight to the foundations of reality."

He thought out again the "Summa" with a modern brain, and was prepared to recompose it in terms adapted to the minds of his contemporaries; he recreated in all its parts a neo-scholasticism, not petrified and anachronistic, but vibrating with life and present day actuality.

His course was officially opened in the large amphitheatre of the College of Adrian VI. In his inaugural address he developed the ideas he cherished, which far from having grown antiquated, retain all their original freshness—the alliance between philosophy and theology which are distinct, but not separated branches, the reintegration without reserve or any apologetic tendency of the science of taking observation into account in the teaching of philosophy, and relating metaphysics with human experience.

It had been charitably prophesied that the new-comer would be preaching in the wilderness. Out of compassion for the professor the theological students were inscribed on his course of lectures as part of the curriculum, so great was the fear of finding an empty space round the new chair.

The pessimists were wrong, for the leading students of the different faculties came forward with great enthusiasm to join this course and follow the young professor who was putting routine out of joint, bringing in new ideas, and breaking down the iron bulkhead that had hitherto divided philosophical thought from science. For a quarter of a century he was to exercise a *rôle* of outstanding importance, to become the leading light in a new school of thought, and to raise up a host of enthusiastic disciples.

"Mgr. Mercier's influence as a professor was immense," wrote one of his students. There is no

better listener than one who loves his master; untiring attention to his course of lectures became the rule.

A former student notes: "My University recollections call back to my mind in a special degree the figure of Mgr. Mercier in the setting of this Institute, the architectural character of which is in such perfect keeping with the modern trend of his teaching mitigated by tradition. In his lectures there was nothing but clarity, a widening of the mind, the aspiration after scientific modernity, precision in analysis, and unceasing effort to piece together synthetically.

"The Professor was in very truth the soul of the Institute; the harmony of the architectural setting with the doctrine expounded was a striking one, and it was a rare mental joy to listen to the neo-scholasticism being set forth in such surroundings by such a master mind.

"Mgr. Mercier did not belong to the order of fluent and eloquent professors. Certain *amateurs* even reproached him at times for his indifference to literary expression. They were wrong to do so, for this philosopher appreciated and was a judge of literature like a professional man of letters; but his spirit of due moderation, and his *discretio rationis* which he drew from his familiarity with St. Thomas, warned him that the flowers of rhetoric do not thrive on the well-trodden soil of the peripatetic school. He was no 'master of verbal subtleties,' which the term 'scholasticism' might evoke; on the contrary, he was a master of luminous realities, and even in the loftiest speculations of metaphysics he carried with him that superior instinct of analysis, that unvarying method of "observation before everything" which is the guiding principle, and the soul, as it were, of the scholastic teaching of St. Thomas and of Aristotle."

Assuming an overwhelming task Canon Mercier went through, alone, the entire course of philosophy from 1882 to 1886. The lectures were broken off once a week

for a sitting of discussion. To oral instruction the indefatigable professor added the labour of the pen. He took public opinion by storm in publishing in the *Revue Catholique*, three grand articles on "Déterminisme mécanique et la Liberté." He started a study club which at once reached a flourishing state. But however great his capacity for work might be, he well knew that one man was not equal to this task by himself. He sought in vain for collaborators among the teaching staff, and found out that he would have to form them from among his pupils. The first names he associated as faithful interpreters of his thought (after Fontaine, who was early taken away by death from his studies) were MM. Nys, De Wulf, Deploige and Thiéry, between whom he was not long in dividing the courses.

In this way was to emerge from the programme he traced out for himself the idea of a special school, the Institute. Analysis continued to broaden, and synthesis to be amplified more and more. A working in conjunction became an inevitable necessity between the men of analysis and those of synthesis in rendering philosophy fruitful by science, and in raising science to the level of philosophy.

In 1887 Mgr. Mercier—he had been promoted by a *motu proprio* the previous year to be a Domestic Chaplain to the Pope—submitted to the Holy Father the scheme of an Institute which should realise in its organisation the great work of synthesis dear to the minds of both. The Pope gave it his enthusiastic approval. In July 1888 he informed the Belgian Episcopate of his intentions, and returning to the subject in November, 1889, confirmed Mgr. Mercier in the mission entrusted to him by the Bishops to preside over the Institute to be established, and made a donation of 150,000 francs to enable a start to be made. In 1891, before the general Assembly of Catholics at Malines,

Mgr. Mercier delivered a report on the question which by the breadth of its views and the vigour of its appreciations aroused general admiration, and has become celebrated.

However, this work, so much desired by the Pope and placed on a definite footing by a Pontifical Brief, dated March 7th, 1894, had a long struggle before it, in the face of the grievous difficulties aroused by mistrust and the clash of opinions. The scheme nearly went under before being definitely established in a peaceful atmosphere. An ex voto of thanksgiving, hanging in the sanctuary at Paray-le-Monial, testifies to the protection given by the Sacred Heart to the threatened Institute, and to its safe deliverance from all the perils that surrounded it.

In 1892, Mgr. Mercier, in an endeavour to form a nursing ground of trained students for his Institute, gathered round him in a house belonging to the Scheutist Fathers, seven seminarists who were undergoing a three years' course of special training in philosophy while following their clerical studies before beginning their theological course. This formed the humble nucleus of the "Séminaire Léon XIII", of which Mgr. Mercier became the guiding spirit and organised it into a spiritual family.

In the midst of all the little gusts of opposition the imperturbable energy of the master-mind never gave way, and even communicated itself to his collaborators by the force of his example.

A man reveals himself when surrounded by difficulties. To-day, now that Thomism has proved that it has retained all its virtues in restoring intelligence to the mind, one can hardly imagine the obstacles accumulated against it at the time of its re-birth. "When one desires to make a study of a celebrated man," wrote Bourget, "one must take him, not at the finish of his career when everyone thinks like him, but at the beginning, when

his thought was not that of everybody." In the life of every hero there come hours of contradiction; those who triumph show precisely of what they are capable. When Pius X raised the Louvain professor to the Primacy of Belgium, in 1906, it was a striking triumph, and repaired the severe measures against the Institute which had been taken in Rome owing to a cleverly engineered misunderstanding in the *entourage* of the Sovereign Pontiff. Since that time the work has proved its vitality; the School of St. Thomas numbers a hundred students who will go forth in the steps of their predecessors teaching philosophy even in America. It possesses three laboratories, and publishes four reviews on its own printing press.

Besides the foundation of this School, Mgr. Mercier left behind him a considerable number of works widely recognised in international University circles: four bulky treatises on Psychology, Logic, Criteriology, and General Metaphysics, a *résumé* of which has been made by a pupil in the "*Traité Élémentaire à l'Usage des Classes.*" Side by side with numerous articles in the *Revue Néo-Scholastique* we may mention: "*La Définition Philosophique de la Vie,*" "*Les Origines de la Psychologie Contemporaine*" and "*Vers l'Unité.*" They are complementary to the teaching in the Schools and are in support of the restoration of the Thomist movement.

"To his mind this was no idolatrous exhumation of fossilised thought. Still less was he pursuing the chimera of definitely bringing the so-called results attained by science into line with the letter of St. Thomas. He believed that the doctrine of the mediaeval master-mind had by no means lost its significance, and that fruitful inspirations might be found therein. But these inspirations must nourish and guide new ideas.

"His programme could not be realised all at once. Just as the disciples of Ruskin, in their desire to re-

discover the sources of creative effort, put themselves at school again to learn forgotten traditions and to grasp their spirit, so was it necessary to renew the connecting link with the great Aristotelian tradition. . . .

"Far then from clothing itself in a stern aloofness, far from formulating excommunications of every kind, and accentuating its divergencies by an aggressive attitude, Thomism would prove itself to be receptive and would endeavour to secure a receptive attitude towards itself. It would seek for points of entry into present-day discussions whereby the old doctrine could insinuate itself, demonstrate its fertility, cement alliances and rejuvenate itself by the swelling of new sap. Such was the general tendency of his work; it was applied in many very happy ways. By adapting the Aristotelian Vitalism to Biology he was twenty years ahead of the theses to which scientific circles of to-day attach the greatest honour; by affirming the necessary convergence of external and internal observation in matters of science and moral doctrine, he placed himself at the central point from which the evolutions of modern systems explain and judge themselves; by interpreting the Thomist theory of truth he indicated the method of re-casting the thought of the Angelic Doctor and of reconstructing the entire system on a plan by which knowledge might secure an entry in accordance with the great contemporary systems. While he was giving to the Louvain school its theoretic trend he was organising at the same time the preparation of the ground in certain domains of science from which great hopes might arise. From the very beginning he urged his collaborators to the study of experimental psychology—a science still young at that time—in which to-day his Institute holds a leading position among similar laboratories. Under his impulse that of Louvain has become one of the best equipped and most active in Europe¹."

¹ Cf Miles, *Le Correspondant*, 10th February, 1916.

We may now ask ourselves what is the position occupied by Thomist Philosophy in the history of thought. The writings of Mgr. Mercier, particularly his lecture (29th April, 1909), on "La Conscience Moderne," fully supply the answer :

The leading ideas characterising the modern conscience are centred in two : the cult of experimental knowledge, and the consideration of a moral ideal.

From the time of Galileo experimental method has ruled as sovereign mistress over the scientific results obtained by observation. It has given to them the prodigious progress which we know.

But enthusiasm may engender exclusiveness ; the mind has naturally a tendency to apply the method it prefers to all subjects it takes in hand. This is what has happened in regard to the experimental method. Little by little people have come to consider it as the sole source from which one can arrive at certitude. People have wished to apply the method generally to every branch of human cognisance. Enquiry into subjects that are not, and could not be, submitted to experimentation, were left on one side or treated with suspicion. Metaphysics, moral questions, and, speaking generally, speculative knowledge, were put in the background in proportion as the experimental method held exclusive possession of the minds of the leading thinkers.

It is however only gross sophistry to support the materialistic thesis on the exclusive efficacy of experimentation. All human actions are capable of being estimated, but it is not because an act has a physical accompaniment that it necessarily belongs entirely and exclusively to the order of physical realities.

This fact struck Kant, the greatest of modern philosophers. As a philosopher and a man of deep learning, he owed it to himself to justify experimental knowledge ;

as a philosopher and an honest man; he owed it to himself to justify duty.

How did he solve the problem?

Quite simply, by separating the two domains, truths in the sensible order, and truths in the speculative and moral order.

According to Kant, the knowledge we acquire is relative, because it proceeds from a pre-existing conformation of our mind which applies to things already existing judgments proper to it (synthetic *a priori* judgments). When it is a question of knowledge in the experimental order, these are matters which, from the impression they make on us, determine the setting in motion of our synthetic *a priori* judgments; from this proceeds the so-called objective special character of certitudes in the experimental order. But when it is a question of matters pertaining to the moral order, not exterior things, but our own ideas or representations of ideas, alone determine the setting in motion of our judgments.

This consequence follows: no real certitude, no knowledge, properly so-called, can arise from this latter operation, which takes place entirely in our mind; our moral determinations, according to Kant, are commanded to us by an instinct which he calls the "absolute categorical imperative", constituting, in his opinion, the foundation of moral obligation.

This made, as one can see, a complete separation between the two domains. Kant's relativity safeguarded experimental knowledge, but the whole of the moral order depended only on sentiment.

This idea of a hard and fast division into two watertight compartments enclosing the action of man's mind and of his will has entirely dominated modern assent for the past hundred and fifty years through the sovereignty exercised over succeeding systems by the Kantian philosophy.

But this antinomy, this bifurcation introduced by

Kant, could not be long in reaching its natural conclusion—nothing less than the overthrow of ideas in the moral order.

The highest minds felt, however, that a moral ideal was indispensable, and while experimental knowledge has been pursuing its course marked by marvellous discoveries, in the other path opened out by Kant systems have succeeded each other, one after the other, without intermission, each going back on the other, without any of them completely satisfying the modern conscience, because each admits its starting point from the principle of Kantian dualism.

Catholic philosophers were the first to feel the shock. Separated roughly from the past by grave social upheavals, and uncertain of the future, they instinctively sought at first to link up again the broken threads of tradition and fell into the opposite extreme—the traditionalism of Bonald, shortly followed by the system of Lamennais which thought it had discovered the source of certitude based entirely on the reason, in general assent, or in universal reason.

France then witnessed the blossoming forth of Cousin's eclecticism, Jouffroy's system inspired by the Scotch thinkers Reid and Dugald Stewart, who made common sense the criterium of truth, and Père Gratry's system which located the criterium in the sense of the divine, and in mystical induction. This brings us to quite modern times when solutions were multiplied one after the other under the names of A. J. Balfour, the Statesman (Lord Balfour); Brunetière, the apologist; and the French pragmatists or immanentists, G. Blondel, Le Roy and Bergson.

Of these philosophers, or thinkers, some laid special stress on a practical or working criterium; these were Balfour, Brunetière and the American School.

Others based themselves more particularly on a special theory of knowledge in virtue of which we never can

know anything but what is previously in us (immanence) and which in this way has become our own life, our own act (pragmatism). This theory is more truly Kantian than all the preceding ones, after accepting which it would seem that there is nothing further left to be done than to rebut reason and even speculative knowledge and thus bring everything back again into doubt.

Where then does the evolution of the Kantian system end? In their beginnings all these systems strove to safeguard the moral idea, but always without being able to free themselves from the dualism predicated by the Koenigsberg philosopher. We have at last to combat speculative knowledge itself, and thus all truth is thrown into a state of flux.

We have now reached this point : since Kantian philosophy has clearly come to a dead stop, since all possible systems have succeeded each other without arriving at the solution explored, there are good grounds for asking ourselves if in very truth the problem was well stated by Kant, and if it must not be posed anew and in quite another way. This is what Pope Leo XIII did.

A careful examination forces us to conclude that Kant was wrong in separating the two domains—speculative and natural knowledge; he should have merely *distinguished* them, as in former days Plato and Aristotle did, and after them, the great Doctors of the Middle Ages.

The latter synthesised the thought of Greek antiquity and Christian thought in a system of philosophy which is too often misunderstood. Contrary to what is generally believed, the great Doctors of the thirteenth century were independent in their thought. Their intellectual hardihood would astonish us. St. Thomas and Albertus Magnus had all the human knowledge available in their day; they combated reason imposed by authority; they

respected real knowledge; did not St. Thomas send Guillaume de Moerbeke the Fleming to Athens in order to study Greek on the spot and to bring back a more perfect edition of Aristotle? The flourishing condition of philosophy in those days is shown in the monumental *Summae*.

Unfortunately scholasticism soon degenerated into disputes about words, and into automatic and impersonal teaching. As a consequence the lay mind interested itself less and less in philosophy. At the outbreak of the French Revolution the Catholics found themselves abandoned and at a loss, and ready imprudently to accept the Kantian solution of the problem.

The scholastic *renaissance* dates only from the end of the last century. But when Leo XIII recommended the renewal of relations with the thought of the great masters of antiquity and of the Middle Ages, he had no desire to make man's intelligence take a backward step, or to transplant in any brusque manner the conclusions and methods of the philosophers of 600 years ago into our own times. Such an anachronism could not be upheld. But inasmuch as the principles inspiring them were those that informed the Greek nation—the most intellectual in the whole world—since they satisfied the greatest minds of pagan antiquity and the Middle Ages, and since, from the time of Kant, all attempts of philosophy opposed to them have failed, and all other possible systems have been tried without success, one is led to ask if one should not again take up the problem at the point reached by the Doctors of the Middle Ages and bring back, in a loyal and unprejudiced manner, the principles animating a former day into the presence of the discoveries of modern knowledge, in order to verify, correct, modify or confirm them, as the case may be.

Such is the task undertaken by neo-scholasticism. It is no closely welded body of definite doctrines, no water-tight system of immutable deductions; it is essentially

method, mind, and living reality; it comes to no other conclusions than those arrived at by repeated observation of facts. It is, therefore, impossible to close up neo-scholasticism in a manual.

The human mind is one, and knows only one fundamental operation applying equally to each of the two domains, and this operation is the power of abstraction. Thus we are only cognisant of laws by means of abstraction; the object of our acts of cognition may vary, but the way in which we become cognisant is one and the same; and, therefore, the evidence on which a law in the physical order imposes itself for our acceptance is affected by the same logical necessity as the evidence of a law in the moral order based on its subordinate relationship uniting us with our proper end. Consequently, if the intelligence makes no change when applying itself to either domain, Kant's starting point is false, and the dualism interfering with it must disappear.

Such, rapidly summarised, is a development of the two leading ideas of modern cognisance in the different systems of philosophy which have succeeded each other during the last hundred and fifty years.

The Church cannot be indifferent to these problems.

The Modernists begged the Pope to admit into the *corpus* of the Faith all that is contained in the current of modern consciousness, that is, not only a respect for experimental knowledge, but also the Kantian interpretation of moral knowledge and moral duty. These, in fact, form the diverse waters mingling in the stream of modern consciousness. The Pope replied: "I accept knowledge, but not the Kantian interpretation which imperils the rights of the Reason."

It is like the answer given by the Saviour when He was tempted in the wilderness by Satan, who offered Him the sovereignty of the world.

It is like the answer given by Gregory XIV to Lamennais, who begged him to undertake the *rôle* of arbiter of

the human reason in addition to that of arbiter in matters of faith.

Similarly with Pius X. The Modernists said to him : " We have arrived at the point of taking possession of, and winning, the entire modern consciousness. Kant's philosophy is supreme everywhere. Accept this fact ; you already reign over the faithful in matters of faith : you will reign also over the reason of the whole world."

The Pope rejected this tempting offer, merely replying : " Begone, I wish to serve truth alone."

" The Germans," wrote Léon Daudet, " in setting fire to Louvain at the beginning of the war, were accomplishing a symbolic act, just as they accomplished another, a little later, when they bombarded Rheims Cathedral. Louvain was, and has again become, the citadel of Catholic metaphysics, of civilised metaphysics, of Thomist metaphysics—to call it by its real name—against the metaphysics of Kant, Fichte and Hegel, typifying Lutheran and neo-barbarian metaphysics.

" Louvain thus had the tragical honour of receiving the first shock of the *furor Teutonicus*, representing the metaphysics of confusion, wrath and annihilation. For men had studied the doctrines of Kant and Hegel *de plano* under passive conditions, absorbing them into their soothed and undisturbed minds and bodies as they flowed from the chair of the Faculty. But they had not studied the possibility of these theories of universal dualism and exasperated contradiction becoming the justification of blind instincts when these were let loose. The ferocity natural to the German people as a whole and to its impregnation by Prussia, was increased by the Kantian philosophy with which it was imbued in its inmost fibres, resulting in a mingling of the reason throughout the spheres of reflection and action with outbursts of the lust of homicide, and with sentiment. People talked of the ether which was given to the Boche recruits in order to stir up their courage for the work

in hand. This ether was not to be compared with the Kantian and Hegelian poison. . . .

“The immense tumult of the war, with its resulting shock of ideas, enables us to compare the dynamisms latent in the leaders of thought, and their power for good and evil. The further off we get from that rain of blood, from that vast hecatomb willed by the Germans, there emerges in a clearer light the perverted and anti-human harvest springing from those baneful works with which our generation was inundated, the harmfulness of which even Renan, wholly imbued with them as he was, felt bound to acknowledge.”

We should like to give here, in its proper chronological place, while Mgr. Mercier was still a professor at Louvain, an account of an alarming incident that happened to him. We will leave M. de Wulff, who was a witness of it, to describe it.

“I wanted to revive a dramatic memory of Burgos, and make a pilgrimage to a modest church, San Lesmo, to revisit again the spot where it is built—you will soon know why—and to find the sentry-box which stood on the further side. A sentry is still pacing to and fro at the spot. . . . It was here that Cardinal Mercier was very nearly killed in April, 1896.

“We arrived at Burgos at five o’clock on a beautiful morning in April, and were to leave next morning by the same train. In accordance with his custom, to which he always remained faithful whatever difficulties might be offered when travelling, Monsignor was desirous of saying Mass before leaving Burgos. After a day devoted to seeing the art treasures of the town he enquired, therefore, in the evening, what church was nearest to the hotel. San Lesmo happened to be the nearest. He went to it, and persuaded the sacristan to promise to open the church for him on the morrow at 4 a.m.

“ But at four in the morning the streets of a Spanish town are scantily lighted and deserted. Mgr. Mercier threaded his way through them from the plan he had made in his head; when he had come to the church, which occupied one side of a quadrangular square, he missed his way and directed his steps towards the building facing him; this building, backing on to a monastery of Bernardine Fathers, looked very like a church of the time of the Renaissance. Suddenly a sentry started up before him, uttering words he did not understand. The soldier, thinking he was being threatened, aimed his rifle at the man approaching him, but hesitated a moment on hearing his cry of alarm on seeing the bayonet pointed to his breast—just long enough for the noise aroused by this brief scene in the silence of the night to give the alarm to the three or four soldiers of the guard stationed there. They rushed up, surrounded the priest, and arrested him. What he thought was a church was in reality a military prison !

“ Burgos was then living in a state of siege, and the country was on the *qui vive* owing to a Carlist insurrection. A sentry had been killed there at his post a few days before by a fanatic who had come down from the mountains to avenge a political prisoner. Everything conspired to give colour to the soldier's suspicions. It was in vain that Monsignor explained matters; no one would believe his story of wishing to say Mass. Just think for a moment; what priest, especially a foreign priest, would venture out at such an hour in an unknown city ! Matters were only put right by the arrival of the sacristan, his form made visible by the flickering light of a lantern in front of the door of the church.

“ The saintly priest recovered sufficient mastery over himself to celebrate the Mass of the day, which was one of thanksgiving, but for long after we had cold shudders when we thought of the adventure.”

When one considers what this Prelate accomplished afterwards as Archbishop and Cardinal, one shudders at the thought that a reflex movement in the brain of a rough and startled soldier might have stupidly put an end to this precious life, the providential significance of which is so clearly seen to-day.

As Georges Goyau justly says, it is the distinguishing mark of great leaders to have the power of withdrawing themselves from their work without imperilling it; it goes on living its own life, through their instrumentality, but apart from them; after giving their services to their work without wishing to monopolise it, they are able, when the day comes, to detach it from themselves, just as ripe fruit detaches itself from the tree; and when their souls are detached they discover in the violence of the wrench the perfume of sacrifice. "In 1906, Pius X proposed this wrench to Mgr. Mercier; he made him Archbishop of Malines. It was required of him to leave unfinished his courses of philosophy in which, after passing through so many stages, he was planning to enter upon the final consideration, that of God. He was required to say goodbye to those young men who, for a quarter of a century, had been the companions of his soul. To belong to them had been still more to belong to himself, for he loved them greatly. The Pope's command reminded him that he belonged only to God. He accepted his new field of action and forthwith entered upon his new duties."

CHAPTER III

THE ARCHBISHOP

Appointed Archbishop of Malines, Feb. 7th, 1906, and created Cardinal by Pius X., April, 1907. Description of Malines. Thinker and man of action. His numerous activities. The Cardinal's Will. His defence of Pope Benedict XV. The Flemish question. Modernist Movement. The Cardinal's love for the Liturgy and his encouragement of good church music. His concern for the maintaining of family life, and his interest in social questions.

FOR nearly a quarter of a century Mgr. Mercier had borne the burden of hard toil and severe buffetings for the cause of Christian philosophy. Trusting in God, obedient to the Pope's wishes and faithful to duty, he had triumphed over every obstacle and had established his work on solid foundations; he could now leave it in reliable and experienced hands.

On February 7th, 1906, His Holiness Pope Pius X appointed him as the successor of Cardinal Goossens, who had died a fortnight before.

One should bear in mind that in Belgium the Government takes no part in the nomination of Archbishops and Bishops. In appointing the Primate of Belgium it is the custom for the Nuncio in Brussels, whose recommendation is the sole one entertained by the Pope,

to place himself in direct agreement with the King as to the name of the candidate to be selected, without the Government being consulted.

The Belgian clergy and the Catholic members of the Government supported Mgr. Heylen, Bishop of Namur, a well known Fleming. The Pope, on the recommendation of the Nuncio and the intervention of the King, chose Mgr. Mercier.

He was consecrated Archbishop of Malines in the Metropolitan Church of St. Rombaut on the 25th March, the Feast of the Annunciation, by Mgr. Vico, the Nuncio Apostolic, and was solemnly enthroned at Malines on Easter Monday, the 10th April, amid the acclaiming demonstrations of the people.

The little town, so quiet as a rule, would have astonished a visitor that day; the statues of the Madonna in the angles of the streets were decorated with banners and flowers, and the bells joyfully answered one another from both sides of the Dyle. The long canals seemed to be in amazement at reflecting so much colour and movement.

Malines offered to its shepherd many attractions in its public buildings and glorious memories—its wonderful Palais de Justice, its incomparable Halles, its graceful and picturesque dwellings, its churches, and its Béguinage. Let me give a short description of them :

The Cathedral is a Gothic edifice of imposing beauty, built in the form of a Latin cross; the greater part of it goes back to the fourteenth century. Despite its varying styles it presents a certain unity.

An immense square tower rises above the entrance, melting away proudly into the air. It is not only the majestic proportions of this building that excite our admiration, but in a special degree the boldness and elegance of its construction, which Vauban described as the eighth wonder of the world. The whole weight of

this mass of masonry, sculptured and fluted right up to the roof of the central nave, rests only on the two side walls supported by eight buttresses placed in pairs at the angles.

In the tower is the famous carillon, a little above the clock. It consists of forty-five bells, and six huge *bourdons*. The latter provide a striking under-current of sound to the harmony, and the different series of bells in this aerial orchestra produce an *ensemble* unmatched in point of sound and harmony, and superior to any other existing in our day.

This wonderful carillon, and Jef Denyn, the master bell-ringer, are rightly the pride of the town. In 1914, at the moment of the German invasion, the carillon became silent; it continued in obstinate silence in spite of the orders of the Occupying Power and an offer of 15,000 francs to repair it; but it found its voice again and pealed forth most sonorously with all its joyous tones the hymns of the allied nations at the moment when the last German contingents with lowered heads were defiling down the streets of the city.

The interior of the basilica is vast; its total length is over 100 metres.

The choir, with its ring of chapels, resembles the form given by French architects of the Middle Ages to most of their churches. The proportions are skilfully calculated so as to present a harmonious whole.

Nothing finer than the choir can be imagined, with its beautifully sculptured statues, its rich pavement of black and white marble, its four magnificent mausoleums, its stalls, its reliquary on the altar, its five magnificent stained-glass windows and the high altar of sober splendour surmounted by a colossal statue of St. Rombaut.

This ancient sanctuary is a veritable museum, full of archæological treasures, pictures, statues, confessionals,



THE CATHEDRAL, MALINES

Photopress

altar pieces, triptyches, tabernacles and precious lace-work in wood and stone.

The Communion rails are remarkable. The pulpit, gracing the nave, represents St. Norbert at the foot of the crucifix, thrown from his horse by a thunderbolt; it is a marvel of sculptured wood, and is of striking size. Magnificent canvases adorn the cathedral, including Van Dyck's "Christ on the Cross," and the "Adoration of the Shepherds" by Quellyn.

Here are a few details of the Episcopal Palace occupied by the Cardinal.

In 1596 Mathias Hovius acquired the property of the Sire de Lille and also the lands of a former house of retreat at Affighem in order to build a suitable Episcopal residence.

In 1717 Cardinal Thomas Philippe of Alsace began building a new palace from plans drawn by an Italian architect. It was to be in the form of a complete square of buildings, with colonnades and balconies looking on to the inner court. The end wing, with façade and projecting buildings facing the garden, had not yet been completed when Thomas Philippe died in 1759.

His successor, Jean Henri de Franckenberg, added a storey to it of a simpler style than that of the rest of the building. Such was the Episcopal Palace when the French came in 1792. The fine collection of books, begun under Jacques Boonen and considerably increased by Cardinal d'Alsace, was placed under seal, and Cardinal Jean Henri had to take to flight.

In 1794 a portion of the collection was sent to France, the Palace was sold, and the purchasers made haste to demolish the end wing and part of the right in order to make use of the materials. The enclosure was bought back in 1818 for the provision of a new Palace.

What remained of the former buildings was taken over, but the work progressed so slowly that it was

barely finished when Mgr. Sterckx, Vicar General to the late Mgr. Prince de Méan, was appointed to fill the See of Malines. The new Archbishop was able to retake possession of the former residence of his predecessor in 1832. The chapel, containing many paintings by old masters, is very simple in style.

Not far from the Cathedral stands the Church of Saint Jean, dating from the fifteenth century, and possessing a superb triptych representing the Adoration of the Magi by Rubens, painted by the great master in the full maturity of his talent.

Passing by the Bailles de Fer, a quarter consisting of narrow, winding streets cut by a bridge of the thirteenth century, on which were formerly old picturesque looking houses, the majority of which were destroyed by fire in 1914, we emerge in front of the Church of Notre Dame, dating from the fifteenth century. Inside are to be seen a Communion bench, and bas-reliefs and interesting decorations; its chief treasure is Rubens's triptych representing the "Miraculous Catch of Fishes." It was painted for the Fishmongers' Corporation of Malines and is reckoned to be his masterpiece. Here again the war wrought its work of devastation. The windows were shattered into fragments.

Near this church is the Porte de Bruxelles, the only one surviving of the twelve gates which formed the fortifications of Malines. It is flanked by two round towers. The old portcullis can still be seen hanging in its groove.

The Dyle, winding its way here and there in the open, washes the foundations of the Church of Notre Dame d'Hanswyck, which was built in 1737 from the plans of Luc Faidherbe.

The pulpit, designed by the same sculptor and carried out by Th. Verhaegan, the four busts of the Fathers of the Latin Church, of which that of St.

Augustine and that of St. Ambrose are attributed to Fr. Boecksteyn, and St. Gregory and St. Jerome to Luc Faidherbe, the confessionals, a few other pieces of carving from the chisel of Faidherbe, and some paintings, are worthy of note.

But the most interesting of all is the greatly venerated statue of the Madonna. The chroniclers relate that a boat carrying various merchandise, and bearing a statue of the Virgin, was passing up the Dyle. When it came behind where the chapel stands it touched some hidden obstacle. Now this could not really happen, for the river at this place was of considerable depth.

Filled with stupefaction, and not knowing to what to attribute this mischance, the boatmen partly unloaded the vessel and harnessed horses to it. Nothing came of this; an invisible power seemed to oppose its further progress. The boatmen thought at last of the statue they had on board. Did this form the mysterious obstacle?

Persuaded that a supernatural intervention had taken place and that the Virgin wished to be venerated on that spot, those worthy men took up the statue and leaving the vessel went and placed it in the chapel of Hanswyck. Hardly had this removal taken place when, unresisting, the boat began to go forward by itself. Great was the joy of the inhabitants, who received the holy statue with enthusiasm and surrounded it with every mark of veneration.

Such was the setting of his glorious apostolate in the humble town of Malines, destined to remain for ever celebrated.

Exactly a year after his consecration the Archbishop was created Cardinal Priest on the 15th April, 1907.

On the 18th April, 1907, Mgr. Caccia delivered in person at Rome the Hat to the newly made Cardinal.

The customary ceremony took place in the presence of a largely attended Belgian delegation. On the 28th April, His Eminence took official possession of his titular church, the Basilica of St. Pierre-ès-Liens, a title destined to receive from the glare of the war a disturbing and well-nigh prophetic significance. The Most Reverend Abbot, Mgr. Strozzi, General of the Order of the Canons Lateran, delivered an address of welcome to him in Latin, to which His Eminence replied as follows :

“Your Basilica always attracted me. As soon as I knew that there was nothing to prevent my expressing to the Sovereign Pontiff any personal preference I might have for any vacant title as Cardinal, a hidden instinct urged me to solicit that of St. Pierre-ès-Liens.

“And you too, Canons Regular of the Congregation of the Lateran, also attracted me. Under the shadow of the Catholic University of Louvain, I had seen your young students increasing in numbers; during our walks about the University town we had more than once admired the happy and modestly restrained expansiveness of your pupils, and the dignified bearing of your novices and professors, and realised at once that their white habits were indeed the transparent symbol of that interior purity of soul which, since their origin in apostolic times, they have known so well how to preserve.

“My dear *confrères*, since I have become one of you, why should I not enter into intimate details which the community of our conversation, as belonging for the future to one family, now authorises? My venerated and dearly loved mother, to whose care, under God, I owe my Christian upbringing and, in all probability, my vocation to the priesthood and apostolate, first saw the light of day in a house belonging to the celebrated Abbey of Sept-Fontaines, which, up to the time of the French Revolution, was occupied by a branch of

your vigorous Congregation. Gladly do I go back to the shades of these former memories for an hour of rest on the evening of a fatiguing day, and to seek in this retirement fragrant with your century-old traditions, a moment of recollection and bracing of the will. I shall cherish the soothing and comforting illusion that we are praying at the same hours and that, though separated by distance, we are doing the same joint apostolic work."

Then, recalling a memory he went on :

"One day, hidden behind a pillar in the Chapel of the Visitation at Paray-le-Monial, I had the opportunity of observing at my leisure the devout, austere, but always benevolent features of Cardinal Adolphe Perraud, the friend of Gratry and Perreyve; this fervent promoter of the devotion to the Sacred Heart was at prayer in the religious attitude so well described by one of our *confrères* who compared the Bishop of Autun to one of the saints portrayed in stained glass windows and on Gothic doorways, and seemed to see in him some Pontiff of the thirteenth century who had come down from his window and was walking in his Cathedral. I looked with admiration at that fine contemplative, and preserve the memory; his bust remained rigid, his head slightly bent, and his eyes fixed on the Tabernacle. He represented to the letter what his brother Charles said of him : ' Adolphe est insatiable du Saint Sacrement.' "

One of the Cardinal's collaborators noted : "Only those who knew him solely as professor, Academician, writer, and headmaster, and were not aware that with this thinker his thought turned invincibly to action, could have been astonished at the prodigious activity displayed by the Cardinal after he was installed in the See of St. Rombaut. The huge work of administration in a diocese of two million, three hundred thousand

souls, and of directing more than two thousand priests, was to fully occupy him. It was an overwhelming task. During the space of twenty years the Archbishop bore this burden without experiencing one hour of failing courage; he was an indefatigable leader in the realm of the intellect, a trainer of souls, and the sheltering guardian of weakness, never sparing but always giving largely of himself, mystic and realist at the same time, bold yet prudent, loyal and skilful, a great figure yet quite simple, eagerly pursuing the ideal, yet passionately devoted to activity, combative yet pacific, allowing people and things to devour his time yet always finding it again, an apostle by word and by the pen, a real apostle through the light that was in him, but above all through charity."

"Look at him," writes one who knew what was his daily life, "transacting his daily business, giving his time to his trusty collaborators, and to visiting religious communities; receiving during long continuous hours rich or poor, people in the humble walks of life and those in the highest ranks of society, laymen and ecclesiastics—everyone who came to ask of his untiring goodness of heart right counsel in bearing some private grief, in putting to rest some doubt, or in deciding on some course of action; even the time set aside for his meals presented opportunities for his apostolic activities; his hospitable table was made especially welcome to those in need of being re-assured, and he delighted in bringing encouragement to them; during his evenings there were visits to pay, opening up fresh work, smoothing over differences, and a huge correspondence to keep up with; throughout all these cares never a murmur or complaint arose from him; his serenity of mind always accompanied his very rare moments of pleasure and constantly present tribulations and anxieties alike. Well, what was it that sustained this magnanimous soul? What else but a deep, revealing and triumphant

belief that the body wearing itself out in toil is a mere nothing, as in the words of Plato, and that this life on earth is not the real life? ”

His overflowing and well ordered activity, distributing itself through every domain, and seizing every opportunity, was however brought into unity by the purpose after which it unceasingly strained—the strengthening and extension of the Kingdom of God, and the diffusion of the supernatural life.

This is reflected in his *Oeuvres Pastorales* as in a faithful mirror; they contain his teaching specially written for certain social categories, notably for priests, working men and young people, and his instructions addressed to the body of the faithful.

He drew up his will in 1908. It is written on four pages of ordinary letter paper, with no erasures or additional words. The handwriting is neat, clear and firm, and of an even precision and legibility characteristic of the mind of the great departed one. The text is as follows :

“ The Good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. In union with our Divine Saviour, Who gave His life for the salvation of the world, I this day, my God, make to thee the humble offering of my life. With my full knowledge I now accept the decree of death issued by Thy Justice in my regard, I submit myself to it with a view to repair the evil I have done in the course of my life, and in the hope that my sacrifice will be of benefit to the flock the guardianship of which Thou hast deigned to entrust to me.

“ Receive therefore my soul, O my God; I give it back into Thy hands. *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo Spiritum meum.* Take from me my life what time Thou wilt, and in what manner Thou wilt. Whether we live or die, Thou art our Lord, and I make it my purpose to belong to Thee as Thy chattel; *sive vivimus, sive morimur, Domini sumus.*

“All my hope is in my faithful Redeemer. *Redemisti me Domine Deus veritatis*. I await from Him pardon for my faults and for my numberless infidelities to grace; I await from Him a fruitful blessing on the works I have undertaken for His glory. Permit me to renew here, O my God, my act of hope in the simple precept of the Catechism which I have so often recommended to others: ‘My God, I hope with firm confidence that Thou wilt give me life eternal *through the merits of Jesus Christ*. I hope to be soon with Thee in heaven, and never more to be separated from Thee.’

“I thank Thee again, and as long as I shall live I wish that my every act shall give thanks to Thee for the signal graces Thou hast vouchsafed me, especially that of my ordination to the priesthood, the thirty-fourth anniversary of which I am celebrating this day of Holy Saturday, and that of my consecration as Bishop, the favour of which I can only explain to myself as a mysterious act of Thy infinite mercy.

“If in the exercise of my ministry I have wounded or disedified anyone, I ask pardon of him. If anyone believes he has failed me in anything let him know that I pardon him with my whole heart and will pray God to pardon him also.

“I have not much to leave. I was possessed of no private means, and the little I have earned by the exercise of my functions and by my publications I have always endeavoured to use in good works, living only from day to day. The few small savings which may be found at my death should be employed in meeting any arrears of my household and the expenses of my funeral, and anything over to be used for charitable purposes and teaching institutions. I make over to my nephews my share in the country property known as ‘L’Hermite.’ As regards anything else they know that they must earn by their toil their means of subsistence.

“ Having said this I appoint Mgr. Louis Degraive, Bishop of Parnassus, to be my *légataire universel*.

“ This Will revokes all previous Wills.

“ Made at Malines, Holy Saturday, 18th April, 1908.

“ D. J. CARD. MERCIER, Arch. of Malines.”

The war was the culminating point in the Cardinal's career. It revealed his greatness by showing him to all as he really was on a wider platform. We shall devote several chapters to this period of his life and, from evidence of official documents, shall show him to have been the serene incarnation of right and justice in face of all the double-dealing and high-handed measures of which he was the object; standing out as the soul of a whole nation during the fifty months of the occupation, the inspirer of their courage and the mouthpiece of their heroism.

Never had his pen been more active. In a voluminous correspondence he fought, step by step, for the last shreds of liberty with Von Bissing, Von Falkenhäusen and Von Laencken.

In his letters, which followed unceasingly one after the other—writing as theologian, philosopher, ascetic and moralist—he published in 1915 a veritable treatise on the Incarnation, and in September, 1918, a Mariology; he co-ordinated events in their relation to eternity in order to reduce them to their proper proportions (1916); he revived men's courage by exalting moral grandeur and Christian grandeur (February, 1917); he branded the abuses of cupidity (March, 1917), and in masterly pages worthy of Bossuet he drew their lesson from the events taking place, justified Providence by showing with deep penetration that the trials of the war brought men nearer to God, revealed and vindicated His suzerainty, and bore in themselves the principle of resurrection.

After the signing of peace on the 29th June, 1919, the Cardinal took part in an impressive manifestation offered by the Belgian nation and her King on the *plateau* of Koekelberg, and proclaimed their gratitude to the Sacred Heart by officially placing the country under its protection.

Far from relapsing into slumber after the war under the shade of past successes the Primate of Belgium set himself to work again with redoubled energy in order to make provision for fresh needs, to obviate new dangers, to reinforce tired souls, and to rebuild the edifice of moral grandeur.

Fresh Pastoral letters poured forth reminiscent of those of Cardinal Pie and Mgr. Freppel: "Rebâtissons" in 1920, which deplored the disorganisation of family life and civil society, and pointed to the rebuilding of the material ruins as an incentive to moral and social reconstruction; "Où en sommes-nous" (1921), inculcating the duties of the present time; a Letter on the "Catholic Unity of the Roman Church" (1922), defining our obligations towards our separated Christian brethren as regards unbelievers; "The Papacy and the Election of Pius XI"; "The Papacy and the Christian Social Sense" according to the Encyclical "Ubi Arcano Dei" (1924); "Nos Déceptions d'après Guerre"; "Espérons quand même"; this last had a very proud ring, attracting the special attention of the foreign press, and winning for the Cardinal the glorious appellation of "Le Grand Juste" from the pen of Charles Maurras.

I cannot conclude this rapid summary without briefly mentioning the Provincial Council which studied the definition of Marie Médiatrice, and the literary conference on the "Modern Conscience" given to the Junior Bar of Antwerp in 1908, and, three years later, that on "The Law" given in the same town before the Society of Saint Yves; a discourse in praise of Bossuet

delivered at Meaux in 1911, a glorification of St. Jerome pronounced in Rome in 1920, and another on Dante given before the Brussels Academy in 1921.

In 1925, as representing the Bishops, he made an exhortation in favour of Catholic union and action in a collective letter entitled "Peace and Fraternity"; he intervened in a difficult and delicate situation by a letter on "Socialism and Liberalism." In November, 1925, he organised a national subscription for the erection of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart.

Providence willed that this noble career should pursue its course harmoniously to the end, and that its setting should correspond with its dawn. The most potent renovator of Thomist philosophy in our times was to devote his last discourse, his swan song, to a glorification of the higher course of instruction on the occasion of the jubilee of the Catholic Institute of Paris, before that memorable assembly in the Trocadéro, at which those present, to the number of six thousand, gave a frantic ovation to that great thinker and great Belgian who loved France.

On the 27th November, 1925, the great patriot, the Primate of Belgium, rising superior to the suffering which was already grievously afflicting him, appeared for the last time in the splendour of his Pontifical functions to render a last homage to Royalty by celebrating the silver wedding of the King and Queen.

The world-wide *prestige* surrounding the Cardinal entered into the patrimony of Belgium; the ovations he received in America in his triumphal progress in 1919, the visits of Heads of States to his Palace at Malines, the titles and distinctions that every country vied in lavishing upon him, and his immense popularity under which, however, he remained the simplest of men, reflected their lustre on the Church, giving us a right to be proud of our Faith.

Magnetised by his renown, even the Anglicans, sepa-

rated from us by four centuries of prejudice, came to him of their own accord, and under his auspices engaged in the celebrated Malines Conversations, of which one day history will relate that they were the first sign-posts on the road leading Great Britain back to Catholic unity.

The celebration of the jubilee of his priesthood on the 12th May, 1924, shone forth in the eyes of the whole world with wonderful majesty, glorifying one who will be known to history as the "Great Cardinal."

There was never seen, nor will be again, a like spectacle. In a public manifestation of magnificent admiration and gratitude, the Church, the whole of Belgium, and the chief nations of the world acclaimed him with one voice.

Certain important questions of general interest engaged the special attention of the Archbishop of Malines. At the risk of anticipating events we ought to include here the reply given by the Cardinal after the war to the unjust attacks that had been made against His Holiness, Benedict XV; he felt it incumbent on him to demonstrate, with the proofs in his own hands, to people, not exactly of bad faith, but at any rate, ill informed (for it is impossible to change the opinion of the former), that these imputations were pure calumny.

"You have been able to appreciate with what solicitude our well-loved Pontiff concerns himself with the nations on whom has fallen the scourge of the war. On the 22nd January, in presence of the Cardinals and Ambassadors of the Powers assembled before him at the Vatican, he delivered an Allocution in which he spoke of Belgium—the only nation he mentioned by name—in words of particular benevolence.

" 'To do more at this moment,' " said the Pope, " 'we are unable if We would not misconstrue the obligations

of Our conscience. Without doubt it belongs to the Roman Pontiff, whom God has set up to be the sovereign interpreter and vindicator of the eternal law, to proclaim before all else that no one, for any reason whatsoever, may violate justice, and this We declare aloud, and vigorously reprove all infringement of right, in whatsoever country committed. But it would be neither fitting nor useful to introduce Pontifical Authority into the differences between the belligerent peoples. For whosoever appreciates the situation in a wise manner must be convinced that the Apostolic See, filled as it is with disquietude over this war, can none the less not range itself on one side or the other. The Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Jesus Christ who died for all men, necessarily embraces within its charity all of those engaged in the war. . . .

“ ‘Is it not natural also that the thoughts and the heart of the common Father of the faithful should be drawn more especially towards those sons for whom he feels yet more attachment? In proof of this, in so far as the dear Belgian people are concerned, amongst other proofs there is the letter We wrote a short while ago to the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines.

“ ‘May we be allowed in this assembly to make an appeal to the humane sentiments of those who have carried the war into foreign territories; let them spare those countries the devastation which their occupation by no means renders necessary; let them refrain especially from what would be a graver matter, from wounding to no purpose the feelings of the people in those matters which they prize above all—their churches, their priests, and the rights belonging to religion and the Faith.’

“ ‘From the beginning of the war perfidious minds have actively striven to make people believe that the deceased Pope Pius X, and our Holy Father Benedict XV, the present Pope, favoured our enemies finan-

cially or morally, and from weakness disregarded the rights of the Belgian nation.

“These are infamous calumnies. The simple, loving and magnanimous heart of Pius X was incapable, I will not say of a base action, but of any appearance of favouring injustice, even though the latter should triumph. The truth is that that noble old man died under the grief which held him in its grasp when he saw the nations of Europe torn by a devastating war, and Providence did not give him time to express publicly the holy horror with which these sanguinary excesses inspired him.

“As regards our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XV, what could he have done for us Belgians which he has not done?

“His very first pontifical benediction was granted to us. . . . On two occasions, notwithstanding the smallness of his resources, he was pleased to make a generous gift to Belgium. He has had the paternal goodness to write to us two letters of encouragement for your intention, not to mention a private letter, marked with the most affectionate tenderness. In it he said: ‘Your letter calls to mind the long series of calamities which have broken over your well loved country, the baleful consequences of which are still being felt. With great delicacy you also recall Our solemn protests at the injustices and violations of right which have been committed against Belgium, as well as Our efforts to alleviate so much suffering. . . .

““While We are concerned, with all Our authority, to bring some alleviation to the sufferings of so many of Our unfortunate sons, We have never ceased to exert Ourselves to bring about the restoration to your dear nation of her full political, military, and economic independence, as well as the reparation of the losses she has sustained. We are fully persuaded that We have done for Belgium and her people all that was possible for Us

to do, and everything that the burning charity of Christ and the most tender paternal affection could suggest to Us.'

"We may add his firm and noble Consistorial Allocation of the 22nd January; his replies to the telegrams from the King of the Belgians, and from our Government; the answer of Van Heuvel, our Minister accredited to the Holy See, and the support given to us with so much dignity and devotion through the intermediary of the Apostolic Nuncio, his representative at Brussels.

"This tacit approbation lasted every day for the space of fifty months. Each time the rights of our people were set on one side we made it our duty to send to our Hierarchical Head the first copy of our protest; never once did he censure or blame either what we had written or done.

"In addition to the Pastorals and documents which were made public I wrote several confidential letters to His Holiness in order to keep him *au courant* with the principal steps taken by my administration.

"At an exceptionally delicate moment a few Belgians joined with the Germans in an attempt to make the Holy Father believe that I was betraying the true interests of my flock, the Belgian people. In a calumnious pamphlet which they hoped to pass through to the Vatican by the instrumentality of the Apostolic Nuncio, the members of this so-called 'Conseil des Flandres' petitioned the Pope for my dismissal.

"The Nuncio refused, and the 'Conseil des Flandres' had to send it to Rome by a devious route. I doubt whether the senders received an acknowledgment.

"Rome never took the trouble to mention the matter to me."

Could anyone wish for a clearer answer to accusations which for too long occupied the press and misled public opinion? No one was better qualified than the Cardinal

of Malines to give assurances indispensable on such a question, but we can see too how in his own mind the sympathetic grief of the Pontiff was joined to his indignation as a loyal man, and what a relief it was to him to voice his protests against an unmerited calumny and to utter a defence of the Pope whose attitude had been travestied.

The Cardinal always conscientiously supported the Royal Family. He never missed an opportunity of manifesting his loyalty to it. The lofty position he occupied in the country, always deeply religious, provided him with the occasions. In a certain sense too he made it a part of his duty.

As he pointed out, a country is made up naturally and freely of individuals, families, and local or professional groupings, whom an identical general interest impels to unite together. If left to themselves these elements would only form an unorganised collectivity, at the most animated by only vague and powerless common aspirations; to realise a national unity these aspirations must be made to converge effectively, and a potent force must actuate and render them fruitful, maintaining the stability of their convergence. The King is that potent force.

To King Leopold he offered the homage of his admiration, to that great initiator who at the time when the idea of creating an African colony awakened in less far-seeing minds only misgivings and distrust, was the only one, or almost the only one, to have an intuition of the real interests of Belgium, and with a strength of mind and will which nothing could discourage, transformed what most people considered to be a dream into a living and fruitful reality.

“ King Leopold II, throughout an exceptionally long reign, always preserved the same unswerving, active and untiring ambition, namely, the advancement of his Bel-

gian Fatherland. He wished the Belgians to take pride in their cities, and that visitors, seeing our national prosperity, might leave with increased feelings of esteem for the little country we are shaping, which occupies an almost invisible space on the map of the different nations in the centre of Europe. He desired to open out fresh outlets for the industrial, agricultural and commercial activity of his fellow citizens."

Notice the expressions in which he hailed the accession of Prince Albert when he succeeded his uncle :

"A Belgian in heart and soul, Belgian in his upbringing, endowed with the gifts of observation, practical sense, tact, skill and activity—qualities which we flatter ourselves are distinctive features of our race—bearing the outward visible marks of our national temperament, the King is a Belgian in the full meaning of the term, and that is why the soul of the nation vibrates so spontaneously in unison with the royal soul of her compatriot. . . .

"In former days there existed in certain churches religious enactments granting to Kings the right of entry with joyful ceremonial. They gave the fur bordered cape to the privileged one, who then took his place in the Chapter of the Cathedral.

"Our clergy take recognition of you, and invite you to share with Her Majesty the Queen a wider prerogative, and one of deeper significance—the right to count upon the loyal trust and prayers of the Bishop, the Chapter, and clergy of the diocese of Malines.

"The Belgians know how Providence has prepared you for your *rôle* of Sovereign. With affectionate interest they have followed each of the stages in the education of the heir to the throne.

"As a child they watched him modelling himself on a Prince known for the sincerity of his faith, for his love of simplicity and study, and growing up under the safe guardianship of a mother gifted with deep religious

piety, devoted to charitable works, and a noble patroness of art.

“As a young man they were proud to see him taking his place among the sons of his future subjects, and mixing with genial sociability with his regimental comrades whose affection and esteem he won by his frankness, good temper and endurance.

“Since then, profiting by the example of hard work and the distinguished experience of his uncle, for whom the arts of politics and diplomacy held no secrets, initiated into the lofty ideas of the reign which has just ended, and firmly determined to employ himself in their progressive realisation both at home and in our Colony, he has admirably completed his intellectual and moral apprenticeship in the difficult art of governing.”

From the day when the Primate thus greeted the young King at the moment of his taking hold of the torch of past traditions, great events have shown that this eulogium was in no way exaggerated; moreover we shall never see the Cardinal in the easy *rôle* of a coiner of smooth phrases, if we may use a familiar expression. The flowers of rhetoric were not for him. When he found himself in a position in which he was unable to give expression to a truth which might be wounding to others he retired behind a barrier from which he could not be moved—that of silence.

We must touch on a delicate matter, the Flemish question. It is important to dwell on it for a moment, because it is the chief complaint brought against the Cardinal by certain Flemings who did not understand his views.

At the College of Saint Rombaud at Malines he clearly gave expression to his feelings in the matter:

“I learnt the Flemish tongue at College, or rather, in spite of myself, the Flemish *patois*. My comrades spoke the *patois* instead of literary Flemish. That was a mis-

take. Speak elegantly and correctly. So long as you refrain from doing this how can you expect to win esteem for the Flemish cause? You must speak Flemish with the literary elegance required by civilisation. When I think of the Flemings, so profoundly attached to religion and to their country, of that marvellously gifted race which in the realm of art has given us men like Van Eyck, Quentin Metsys, Rubens and Van Dyck, I cannot withhold my admiration and my keenest sympathies. I am speaking to you here as a friend, and it is in your power to render me a service. I tell you that the Flemish race has few more fervent admirers than the Archbishop of Malines. And if you think I am sincere I beg you to do all you can in this sense in the Chamber, in the Provinces and in the village."

In his "*Instructions aux Directeurs et aux Professeurs des Collèges libres d'Humanités, sur l'Enseignement de la langue Flamande*," published in August, 1906, he gives directions in the matter.

A proposal had been introduced by Coremans, a Deputy, having in view to reform the teaching of the Flemish language in the higher Colleges. Three amendments to this Bill were successively proposed. None of these satisfied the generality, or even a pronounced majority of friends of the Flemish cause, either at headquarters or in the press.

These different attempts tended to set a higher value on the Flemish language.

Flemish was too little known, too little studied, because it was not sufficiently highly esteemed.

"In the eyes of a large number of people," wrote the Primate, "it would seem convenient to ignore the Flemish language. Many even consider it 'good form' to despise the popular idioms, and are not far removed from thinking that to possess distinction is equivalent to a real or simulated ignorance of the language of more than half the Belgian people.

"This is an anti-Christian, anti-social, and anti-national prejudice.

"Anti-Christian:—Should not Christian fraternity make us all determined to wish for others the good that we wish for ourselves? Now, is not a people's language its most treasured possession after its Faith?

"Anti-social:—What is a society if not a union between men whose aspirations rise up to the same common ideal? How is it possible to develop these converging aspirations without a language common to all in which to translate them into words? And since the Flemish people, working men and lower middle-class, have neither facility nor leisure to learn the French language spoken by the educated classes, is it not on the latter that the duty falls to become familiar with the language of the populace in order to get to understand them?

"The contempt which many profess for Flemish becomes with them an *anti-national* prejudice. Belgian nationality is the *raison d'être* of the nation, who through the space of twelve hundred years have multiplied their influences. In order to *preserve* the nation, it must remain faithful to the law of its historical development.

"The Belgians who speak French do well to take their inspiration from the literary culture of the French language, and from the national temperament. The Flemings are right to remain attached to Flemish literature; let them have their national writers and let such do their best to assure for themselves a public to whom they can address themselves and by whom they can be understood. Is it not a thing to be desired that every educated Belgian should understand the two languages of the nation? All the more so that having been initiated into a Roman and a German language the Belgian would possess the key of those European languages which to-day are indispensable to all who desire advantageously to enter into the universal competition in economic and scientific domains.

"There is no doubt that Flemish should be better known, but it never will be until it is more highly thought of.

"Those who have learnt it should no longer be ashamed of speaking it; those who are studying it should not rest content with knowing the few scraps required for a disconnected conversation on some trivial subject, but should know how to express elevated ideas, in this language, in a correct and even attractive manner, an understanding of which necessarily accompanies the march of civilisation."

And he goes on to say: "All should work together in the realisation of this object wherein woman has a rôle equal to, if not superior to that of man. It is she who leads the conversation in her *salon* wherein the highest elements of society meet together.

"The clergy, too, whether in the pulpit or when teaching the catechism, should instruct their flock, or can initiate the young in a sober language, devoid of trivialities, and be ever striving after effect.

"The protagonists of the Flemish cause should have it at heart to give a new value to it. It is their first duty to make themselves masters of their language, to speak it correctly, and to banish from the circles under their influence all forms of coarse *patois* and careless speaking. Why substitute French for Flemish as soon as the conversation rises above the level of vulgarity, just as if only French could give an adequate form to any higher sentiments?

"On the other hand, every educated man ought to be able, if he would not be considered wanting, to exchange without difficulty his ideas with those whose usual language is French.

"Flemish by itself is not enough to-day. No father of a family anxious for the future welfare of his children does not wish them to have a practical knowledge of French. All the more reason that those who are ambi-

tious to extend their activities beyond the frontiers of their country should, by hook or by crook, know one international language, French, German, English, or more than one of these languages. To promote the study of Flemish to the detriment of these world-wide languages means a putting back of our active and enterprising Flemish race, and severing the means by which they may associate themselves with the general progress in science, letters, art, commerce and industry.

“When we consider the bilingual composition of the Belgian nation it is reasonable to employ Flemish for that portion as the current language in the primary schools. Nevertheless the use of Flemish in any branch should not exclude French.

“Under the present conditions of primary education and teaching in the family, one first essential is necessary, that of Flemish instruction in the preparatory classes of our colleges where the humanities are taught.”

The Cardinal was not above entering into details. He drew up himself the *horarium* of the humanity classes, and of subjects susceptible of being taught in Flemish, laying down the best methods of instruction for each of them.

The teaching of Flemish at the University drew his special attention. In this case the situation was different. The Cardinal pointed this out very clearly in a passage we will quote, for his attitude over this question has been misrepresented. It is impossible for a reasonable man not to agree with his points.

“In its lofty conception the teaching at the University has for its purpose the promotion of the general interests of civilisation, that is, progress in science, art and philosophy.

“In fact the Universities are also, in their secondary aspects, higher professional schools.

“Anyone who understands the *rôle* of a University from the first point of view cannot reasonably pretend

that French and Flemish should be placed on an equal footing in the teaching of the University.

“The adoption of an international language in the University courses is indispensable and one which assists relations with the most influential nations of society. French, German and English are languages of world-wide circulation. Flemish is almost exclusively a national language, comparable with Danish, Swedish and Norwegian. When learned men who are natives of this small country desire their works to pass beyond their frontiers they have them translated into the German or French language.

“We may regret that this is so, and may deplore the fact that men of science no longer correspond with each other in Latin, as was the case with Descartes, Newton and Leibnitz. But we are in presence of a fact, and all efforts to create an international scientific language of an artificial character have hitherto ended in failure. Anyone, therefore, who would like to play his part beyond the Belgian frontiers, and exercise a scientific, economic, moral and religious influence of an international scope, must make a thorough study of some other language than Flemish. In most cases the Belgian will find French to be the international language the easiest within his reach.

“And as everyone is a man before he is a Belgian, that is, inasmuch as the general interests of civilisation are superior to the particular interests of a nation, the acquirement of French by those who are called to play a part in the universal movement of thought or action should come before that of Flemish.

“From these general views this conclusion emerges :

“The teaching given at the University, in so far as it initiates the young man into the exercise of any general influence on society, must in Belgium be given in French.

“Flemish will have its proper place within the limits

required, defined by the exigencies of the subjects taught, and by our patriotic concern to favour the literature of half the Belgian population.

“The judge, the barrister, the agricultural or industrial engineer, must learn the language of their clients and subordinates.

“Those Flemings who wish to make a Belgian University Flemish have not sufficiently considered the higher functions to which a University should lay claim. If their demands were to be granted the Flemish race would at once be reduced to a condition of inferiority in the universal competition of the world.

“People who clamour for a Flemish Catholic University are fruitlessly and dangerously asking from Belgian Catholics what is impossible. The resources flowing from charity, however abundant they may be, do not permit of our maintaining two Universities. From both the Catholic and patriotic point of view a division of our intellectual forces can only be disastrous.

“The reasons making us reject the idea of a Flemish University in Belgium impel us also to oppose the introduction of Flemish as the sole or principal language for teaching the humanities. . . .

“Let us hope that a national spirit will prevail over that of a provincial. All men desirous of public order, and all citizens who place foremost the unity of our country and respect for authority will call to mind Christ’s words: ‘A city divided against itself cannot stand.’ ”

The Flemish question is still at the present time a dangerous foment of permanent agitation.

By her self-abnegation and heroism in the most tragic hour of her history, Belgium has won for herself such renown that she owes it to herself to smother this germ of weakness and diminution.

The views of the Cardinal on the Modernist heresy

are sketched in the following paragraphs. As in every one of the questions he approached they carry with them simplicity, clearness and force—the privilege ever accompanying genius.

On the 3rd July, 1907, the Pope drew up a list of errors, which, later on, were grouped together under the name of "Modernism," and condemned them. On the following 8th September he issued to the world an Encyclical of incomparable comprehensiveness, clearness and vigour, with a view to explaining the reasons leading to his condemnation of Modernism. These errors, which had over-run France and Italy especially, had few supporters in Belgium. Nevertheless, the Cardinal considered it to be incumbent on him to bring to the notice of his flock this Encyclical "Pascendi Dominici Gregis."

"What is Modernism?"

"Modernism in its essence consists in affirming that the religious soul must draw from itself, and from nothing but itself, the object and motive of its Faith. It rejects every revealed communication which might impose itself on its conscience from without, and thus, as a necessary consequence, it becomes the negation of the doctrinal authority of the Church established by Jesus Christ, and ignores the hierarchy divinely constituted to rule over the Christian body. . . .

"Christ did not show Himself to the world as a leader of a school of philosophy, uncertain of Himself, and leaving to the free discussion of His disciples a system of opinions capable of being reformed. Strong in His divine wisdom and sovereign power He imposed upon men, at the moment of His imposing it, His revealing word which would show them their eternal salvation and the only road leading to it.

"He promulgated a code of morals and gave to them those helps without which it is impossible to put those rules into practice.

“ He instituted a Church. Since He was to pass only a few years among us, He entrusted His powers to His Apostles before He left us, with the faculty of handing them on to their successors, the Pope and the Bishops.

“ A Christian is one who, trusting in the authority of the Church, sincerely accepts the doctrines she proposes for his belief. He who repudiates or places her authority in doubt, and in consequence rejects one or several of the truths she requires him to believe, shuts himself off from communion with the Church.

“ The excommunication pronounced by the Pope against hardened Modernists is the most natural thing in the world. It is merely a question of loyalty. Do you believe in the divine authority of the Church? Yes or no? Do you consent to obey her?

“ If the answer be yes, she places her Sacraments at your disposal and takes upon herself to lead you to the gates of salvation.

“ If the answer be no, you are deliberately breaking the link uniting you to her, which she had fastened and consecrated by her grace. You no longer belong to her before God and your conscience. Do not be bent on remaining hypocritically within her bosom. Loyalty forbids you to pass yourself off as one of her sons, and she, who will not and cannot be an accomplice in sacrilegious hypocrisy, asks you, and if necessary, summons you to leave her ranks.

“ Of course she only repudiates you for as long as you yourselves wish. On the day when, deploring your aberration, you return loyally to recognise her authority, she will welcome you back with maternal clemency.

“ The ideas that gave birth to Modernist doctrines arose and germinated on the soil of Protestant Germany, immediately became acclimatised in England, and sent out some off-shoots to the United States.

“The Modernist spirit passed to Catholic countries; among certain writers, unmindful of the tradition of the Church, it caused the inception of errors the enormity of which appals upright consciences simply believing the Faith of their baptism. This spirit has breathed over France; Italy has suffered gravely from it, and certain Catholics in England and Germany have been affected by it; Belgium is one of the Catholic countries that has best withstood its pernicious influence.

“But I still fear for your souls the contagion of the Modernist spirit.

“Catholicism says that the Christian’s faith is communicated to believers through an official organ of transmission—the Catholic Episcopate—and that it is based on acceptance of the authority of that organ. Protestantism, on the contrary, says that Faith is exclusively a matter of individual judgment founded on the interpretation of the Scriptures.

“On one side Authority : on the other Individualism.

“The Protestant spirit has filtered here and there among Catholic circles, and has caused the germination of conceptions in which are to be found at one and the same time a pious intention, the proselytism of a Catholic mind, and the intellectual deviations proper to Protestantism.

“The most penetrating observer of the contemporary Modernist movement, the most watchful of its tendencies, the man who has best evolved its spirit and is perhaps the most deeply imbued with it, is the English priest Tyrrell.

“Now among his numerous writings, in the midst of pages of a penetrating piety, there breathes a breath of heterodoxy which is none other than the mother idea of Protestantism.

“Always almost exclusively attentive to the interior workings of the conscience, hardly or not at all concerned with the traditional teachings of dogma and

ecclesiastical history, anxious in the highest degree to retain within the bosom of the Church those of our contemporaries who are disconcerting the noisy affirmations of unbelievers who sometimes in the name of natural science, and sometimes in that of historical criticism, endeavour to pass off their philosophic prejudices and conjectural hypotheses as the conclusions of science, and as conflicting with our Faith—Tyrrell has renewed, forty years after, a similar attempt to that made by the apostate Dollinger.

“In his view Revelation is not a deposit of doctrine entrusted to the guardianship of the Church, the authentic interpretation of which at different periods of her history must be accepted. It is the life of the collectivity of religious minds, or rather of all minds of good will who aspire to realise a higher ideal than that possessed by material and egoistic consciences.

“The leading principle animating Modernism has been strongly influenced by the philosophy of Kant, himself a Protestant and the originator of a special theory by which the universal certitude of knowledge is placed in opposition to an exclusively personal certitude based on religious feeling. It has also, without doubt, been influenced by that infatuation, as wide-spread as it is unreflecting (the intellectual world has paid flattering homage to Kant—even the French, so hostile by national temperament to German domination, have given that genial dreamer the honour of a niche in their Pantheon of philosophers) by that infatuation which leads so many excellent minds to apply, arbitrarily and *a priori*, a hypothesis to history, especially to the history of our sacred books and dogmatic beliefs—the hypothesis of evolution—which far from being a general law of human thought is not even verified in the limited field of the growth of the vegetable or animal species. But in itself the idea which originally inspired many generous champions of Catholic apologetics, and made

them founder in the sea of Modernism, is at bottom none other than Protestant individualism substituting itself in place of the Catholic conception of a teaching authority established officially by our Lord Jesus Christ, and charged with the duty of telling us what we must believe, under pain of eternal damnation."

Whence springs the attraction offered by Modernism to the young?

Two principal causes contribute to this phenomenon.

"The unbelieving press cries aloud that the Pope, in condemning Modernism, has placed himself across the road of progress and refuses to Catholics the right to advance with the times. Deceived by this falsehood to which certain Catholic polemist have attached credence, a few upright minds, hitherto faithful to the Church, are wavering and becoming discouraged, in the entirely erroneous belief that they cannot obey their conscience as Christians and at the same time serve the cause of scientific progress."

The number of learned Catholics and their qualifications makes easy the refutation of this error.

"The second false deduction favouring the penetration of the Modernist spirit among the young and sometimes rendering it seductive to the masses is the unconscious assimilation of the constitution of the Catholic Church by the political organisations of our modern societies.

"Under the Parliamentary régime each citizen is supposed to be invested with a portion of authority in the direction of public affairs. The revolutionary theories put into circulation by Rousseau, and formulated in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* in 1789, have spread among the masses the unreflecting idea that the directive authority of a country is made up of the sum of the individual wills of the social collectivity.

"The representatives of power are therefore considered as uelegates whose exclusive rôle is to interpret,

and to secure the adoption of the views and the will of those who placed them in power.

"Dollinger wished to apply this conception of authority to the Bishops assembled at the Vatican Council. Tyrell in his turn applies it also to both the Bishops and the faithful, to ecclesiastics and to laymen of the Christian community, only reserving to the Bishops, and even to the supreme authority, the Pope, the right to register and proclaim authentically what the scattered members of the Christian family, and even those vowed to religion, think, desire and feel.

"To entertain such views is to be unmindful of the words of the Son of God, made Man, giving to His Apostles His sovereign and unalterable command: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned."

"If anyone refuses to obey the Church," says our Lord in another connection, "consider him as a publican or a pagan," that is as a man without the faith. For "I tell you of a truth, whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Anyone who has seen the Cardinal officiating can realise the importance he attached to the Liturgy, even if he was not aware of it otherwise. It was a subject especially dear to him and it often comes up in his letters and discourses.

"As a philosopher his sensibilities were too keen and too rich," writes Monsieur Legrand, "not to appreciate to the fullest extent the *rôle* which art is called upon to play in the expression of our thoughts and feelings, and in bringing out the best of our faculties. He was fully aware that therein is a note the lack of which renders the gamut incomplete and the harmony defective.

“Philosophy, without doubt, was his favourite subject, but he knew that by itself it left sterile considerable portions of our human nature; it belonged to art to cultivate these portions, to render fruitful the germs lying hid, and to increase the treasures buried away in us.

“If we open his book on logic we read: ‘The exclusive concern for truth and the constant endeavour to consider everything only in its relation to the intelligence, may vitiate the law of harmony which should guide the development of our faculties. . . . One cannot with impunity confine oneself to the *régime* of the intellect. It only actuates and perfects a portion of us—a fundamental and essential portion, it is true—which is not, however, the whole man. When it predominates over the mind it gives to it a too speculative cast, and diminishes its sense of the complexity of things. . . .’

“The Liturgy, in its wide acceptation, consists of the rites of external public worship taken as a whole; in its chief and highest acceptation it is the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice in which is centred the profession of our Christian and Catholic faith.

“Music, therefore, and the chants composed with a view to heighten the effect of the Liturgy would be out of place in a church, or at least not in their place, if they failed to fulfil the essential condition laid down by St. Thomas, that of helping the soul to pray and lifting it up to God.

“The cantor, and the organist whose mission it is to accompany the liturgical ceremonies, must be familiar with the Liturgy, must have their minds penetrated by it, and must pray themselves in order to be able to lead others into the path of prayer without doing hypocritical violence to their consciences.

“The man who would write Church music must have faith. ‘And that,’ adds Vincent d’Indy in no uncertain fashion, ‘is the first essential truth from the general

artistic point of view ; the composer who does not truthfully and deeply feel what he wishes to create is unworthy of the fine name of artist.' ”

“To be in its right place in the church music must combine four conditions :

“It must be vocal, to the exclusion of every other instrument except the organ.

“It must be combined. It must take account of the Liturgy, and it must be prayerful, that is, must make use of no rhythmic, melodic, or harmonic forms of expression other than those suitable to a state of prayer.

“To-day the path is opened wide, and the more difficult obstacles have been removed.”

At a time when profane music was making an attempt to invade the church, the *Motu Proprio*, issued in 1908 by Pope Pius X, reminded Christians of the religious respect which is due to the majesty of worship, and, while many of the faithful were wandering in search of superficial emotions, he urged them to get closer to the liturgical life of the Church and earnestly invited them to draw from the traditional practice of collective religious chanting a more lively sentiment of the communion of saints.

The foremost mission of a Bishop is to strive to maintain and promote the dignity of the House of God, wherein are celebrated the august mysteries of religion, and where Christians assemble to receive the grace of the Sacraments, to be present at the holy Sacrifice of the altar, and to unite in the common prayer of the Church at the solemnities of the Church's offices.

And so when Pope Pius X in his *Motu Proprio* of the 22nd November, 1908, asked for the re-establishment of the old traditional Gregorian chant, the Cardinal gave a ready reply to this request by taking a number of measures.

“Our majestic Cathedral, of which you are so

legitimately proud, lends itself wonderfully to the public expression of your religious worship. Come to it, I beg of you, come in crowds, hasten to it, men and women, children of the people and of the wealthy classes, come and melt together in the same sentiments of piety towards our common Father who is in heaven; you will not leave without at least experiencing the desire of loving one another more closely.

“You will sing together at Mass and Benediction. St. Basil, the great Bishop of Cæsarea, said to those who wanted to deprive the Eastern Church of the general custom of singing the Psalms: ‘Respect, therefore, our religious chants; they are a help to the common people in their efforts to penetrate the meaning of the Scriptures, and accustom them to offer to God more attentive thoughts and a more recollected heart. Let us all, therefore, have one and the same speech and one heart to sing the Psalms in unison to the praise of the Lord; each one of us will find in them the expression of his repentance.’

“And does not this avowal of St. Augustine deserve to be noted: ‘O my God, how often have I wept during the singing of Thy hymns and canticles! How did these harmonious chants of Thy Church move me to the inmost depths of my soul! While I was savouring these tones Thy truth insinuated itself into my heart; my pious sentiments became warmer, my tears flowed, and I felt happy while I wept.’

“Is it not a sad thing to see how often our children grow weary in our churches, how people more advanced in years sometimes appear indifferent, assisting at the most august of our mysteries in a passive manner which is near neighbour to heedlessness?

“Keep the child alert, and its young heart will start up. Take a man right out of his preoccupations by making him take an active part in prayer, and he will find there is rest in what perhaps he only considered to

be an irksome precept imposed upon him by authority.

“And is it good, continues the holy Doctor, that this expression of our religious sentiments should take a musical form?

“Music can be an aid to religious sentiment; it can also be detrimental to it.

“It can be an aid since, in accordance with an admitted principle, it is recognised that the spiritual affections of the soul become intensified when translated into corporeal forms, and the art of music offers to the sensible expression of our emotions resources which may be infinitely varied, and is wonderfully capable of refining the loftiest sentiments of our souls in its dealings with God.

“Moreover, every sentiment finding a happy expression tends to make itself shared by others.

“But when, instead of being a means of fixing the attention, of keeping up religious feelings and communicating them to others, music is nothing but an occasion for exhibiting vainglorious talent seeking to win applause, or to flatter the senses, it is to be condemned and should be banished by anyone understanding the nature and sacred purpose of religious emotion.

“But music is only one element of that art which should have its place in our lives.

“What is art, when all is said, but a seeking after the beautiful? And what is beauty but that which provides the soul—the soul of the artist in the first place, and afterwards that of the spectators—with the pleasure of disinterested contemplation?

“Is not your mission, therefore, a moral one? It is not required of you to be a Cato or a Bourdaloue. Each in his own way. But every time that, by the delicacy of your design, by the harmony of the lines you trace, by the play of light and shade in your composition, by the form you give to stone, wood or metal, you give

expression to an idea wrought out by patient observation of the things of nature, to an idea which has become your own, which has been cherished and loved within your souls, and the inspiration and motive of which you desire to share with your brothers, you are strengthening in them the sentiment of human dignity, you are uplifting the aspirations of their hearts, and in this way, with sometimes greater success than the orator in the pulpit, you are making yourselves the champions of the sacred cause of public morality.

“Is it therefore to be wondered at that all the efforts of Christian artists centre round our churches? The history of painting, sculpture and architecture, among Christian nations, is practically the history of the first religious sanctuaries in the catacombs, then of the Byzantine basilicas, followed by that of our marvellous cathedrals, whether Roman or Gothic. Art is the recollection of the presence of God, and is all the more inspiring in proportion as the recollection of this is more earnest and the sentiment of the divine more keen, more ardent, and more full of love.

“Is there any religious soul, that is, any loyally human soul who does not understand the language of our churches? *Vere non est hic aliud, nisi domus Dei et porta coeli.* In truth, as is sung by the Liturgy, there is nothing in them which does not remind us of God whose dwelling is in the temple, and the heavens of which it is the gate of entry. Churches possess a two-fold character, and present a two-fold purpose to artistic effort, as a consequence—God made Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, the resplendence of the glory of the eternal Father, the consubstantial expression of His inner life, the almighty sustainer of the universe. He who, after expiating our sins, left to take His place at the right hand of Majesty in heaven, even He deigns to choose our churches for His abode : *Hic domus Dei est.*”

“And you, pious souls, who have at heart the dignity of our worship,” he said in an exhortation which is not lacking in a certain humour, “encourage by your generosity these noble artisans who take pains to elevate their humble calling to the level of art, who pray while they labour and would like to help you to pray by the fruits of their toil.

“Do not go so far as to squander in the House of God your overflowing stores of piety. Do not overload the walls of the church with caricatures which travesty the noble features of Christ on His way to Calvary, with those papier-maché imitations lacking all movement and life we see offered for the veneration of the people, which should express in vivid language the zeal and courage of the apostles, the constancy of the martyr, the purity of virgins and the superhuman virtue and supernatural serenity of all the saints.

“Strip off from our altars those tattered and dusty paper ornaments, and those vulgar tin objects which with equal contempt for nature and art are called artificial flowers.

“Each season brings to us its varieties of colour and perfume; invite in their turn the chrysanthemum, the wild holly with its scarlet berries, the hyacinth, the azalea, the lilac, the lily and the rose, to give praise in our churches to God’s greatness. *Benedicite universa germinantia in terra Domino.*

“Of a truth, the spot chosen for divine worship is sacred, and often we do not think of this. *Vere locus iste sanctus est et ego nesciebam.*

“For God’s honour respect the dignity of His temple, out of regard for His temple and for the edification of the faithful, apply art in the service of worship, give encouragement to Christian artists, and do not help to crush their aspirations beneath the weight of commercial competition and mechanical products.

“In this way the public will gradually acquire a

taste for artistic things, and insensibly will come to regard it as a social duty to encourage the realisation of what is beautiful, not only by an admiring contemplation of our masterpieces, but also by contributing to clothe the ordinary things of life in graceful, smiling and attractive forms."

The Cardinal ends by inviting the public administrations, the local councils, the Board of Works, and private individuals to preserve with jealous care the treasures of ancient art as an aid to maintaining aesthetic taste and respect for the national traditions.

We may well say, from the documents we have in our hand, that the Cardinal was one of the first Champions of the recognition of the importance of family life.

There is no doubt that the Belgian nation is wonderfully prosperous. With a population of seven million inhabitants, Belgium occupies the fifth place in commercial importance, after England, Germany, the United States and France; when compared with her population she is ahead of the nations of the old and new world in her economic movement.

But her notions of the duties of conjugal life, and of the sound and vigorous education of children, have deteriorated or become perverted.

The bed-rock reason of the union of husband and wife is the founding of a family and the procreation of children whom they will have the honour and obligation of bringing up in Christian faith and morals, and to whom it will be their mission to transmit the treasures they have themselves inherited.

In the case of the individual, as well as of the species, the satisfaction of the senses is only justified by the function it pre-supposes and is charged with the duty of carrying out.

"How uplifting and good it is to see families—

whether aristocratic, *bourgeois*, or of the working classes—wherein many children, like olive branches, surround the stem from which they spring with an ample and vigorous crown, filling the family hearth with life, movement and joy, wherein the warm breath of filial and fraternal affection prevents the father and mother from dwelling too long on the difficulties and troubles inseparable from existence, and gives them the prospect of an old age neither solitary nor forsaken.

“Is there a more beautiful thing in this world, anything more comforting or more worthy of all our respect than a family like this, happily still common among our hardy people, the working classes especially, among whom we see six, eight, ten and even more children growing and developing and preparing themselves for the school of labour, and even, let me have the courage to say, for the still more virile school, that of privation and sacrifice?

“These are the factories wherein energy is forged and character is tested.

“In proportion as competition grows more intense, the spirit of invention becomes more keen, machinery is made more perfect, the products of the soil are more skilfully and exhaustively exploited, outlets more eagerly sought, and thus by the very herding together of the population the progress of industry and commerce is accelerated. The children of large families are better equipped to succeed in this economic strife. Broken in to a life of toil from their earliest years, habituated to endurance, endowed with a character more softened by the daily rubbing of elbows in brotherly association, and possessed of more disciplined and stronger wills, they hold in their hands better chances for future success.”

But the decrease in the population is especially marked in the Walloon provinces of the country. How-

ever, the number of marriages per annum is steadily increasing. It is their productiveness, therefore, that is being affected.

Throughout the country, the natality is rapidly diminishing in towns of any size. In the largest urban centres the number of deaths is approaching that of births in a disquieting degree, and in some cases the deaths exceed the births in number.

The great influx of people from the country into the towns has up to now made up for the gaps in the urban population, and has concealed the peril from us. But there are country districts which are becoming depopulated. Official figures show a continued decrease in natality, taking the country as a whole.

After showing that the remedy is one based on religious grounds, the Cardinal said in 1909: "It is incumbent on the public authorities, and, failing them on private charity, to come to the aid of approved large families in their times of distress.

"Individualism on an equal footing, the aim of the French Revolution, is not extinct in our public policy. Our social legislation is excellent, but requires to be completed. It is desirable that people should be more thoroughly convinced that the organic unity of society does not rest on the individual but on the family, and should seek, as a consequence, to distribute more equitably the national burden among families, so as to lighten the public charges borne by large families, and to require a higher contribution from those parents who have not had the generosity and courage to provide more citizens for the community."

After the war he went into the question thoroughly and observed the disorganisation of family life that was taking place.

With his keen insight he noted that family life was on the decrease in a very large number of homes. There might be a lack of fuel, a scarcity of meat, and bread

not too plentiful, but there was always enough money to go to the cinema; young girls were providing themselves with extravagant and provocative attire and were giving themselves up to licentiousness; the parents, meekly giving way to them, no longer held the reins of authority in their homes; some merely laughed, others let matters go their course; the young folk wasted their high salaries on gambling, or spent their livelihood, so quickly and easily acquired, on frantic pleasure.

All this life of artificiality scattered to the winds the voice of conscience and prevented it from being heard; people were becoming tolerant of behaviour from which morality was banished and religion forgotten; little by little fine minds, hitherto chaste and robust, were becoming degraded; the level of family life was growing debased, and we were going down into the sink of pagan immorality.

He attributed in great part this licentiousness of ideas and life to the reading of bad books. "Catholicism is synonymous with a broadening of the intellect; its very precise obligations in regard to dogmatic truth and of individual moral training, combined with the special safeguards provided by them, are perfectly able to be reconciled with the legitimate demands of the general education of the mind. In this connection the malice of our adversaries would try and make the public believe that libraries founded by Catholics must necessarily be inferior in quality, interest and organisation to those founded by the enemies of our faith. We have to guard ourselves against this methodic infiltration of harmful reading. It is holding out for the future of Christian ideas a menace which can leave none of us indifferent. It must be our work to confront our own propaganda with theirs. Now the secret of victory in struggles of this kind, in order to conquer public opinion, is to do better and act more quickly than the adversary."

These courageous words of the Cardinal were heard

and his recommendations followed. Family life, which had become relaxed after the war, seems to have been renewed in this country in which the family has always opposed a solid rampart against its dissolution.

Cardinal Mercier shed over every domain of thought and life the rays of his lofty philosophic intellect and the higher light of his faith. By its very transcendence it was removed from the ordinary qualities in which lesser minds readily find their place. He made no pretensions to literature, yet he spoke magnificently on Dante; he did not profess to be a sociologist, yet on social questions he expressed the most essential and up-to-date views.

Filled with zeal in the discharge of his duties as Primate, the Cardinal did not confine himself to merely transmitting his instructions to the faithful. He had it at heart to put them into practice and boldly to realise them. His comments on the Encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Ubi arcano Dei* are models of clarity and good sense.

His activity in social questions knew no bounds; he loved the working people, and never refused to take the chair at institutions whose object was to unite them or to help their religious or economic interests.

Again, by the distinguished support he was good enough to give to the 'Union Internationale d'Etudes Sociales' of Malines, the Cardinal showed in the years after the war how greatly he had at heart the apostolate of social questions.

Faced with the problems which had sprung from the war, particularly by new forms of usurious injustice, excessive speculation, monetary disturbance, the breakdown of public finances in several countries, without mentioning the tension—always at an extreme point—of the relationship between capital and labour, it seemed to Catholics interested in social questions in different coun-

tries that the work, lately inaugurated successfully by the Union of Freiburg, was not yet achieved; that it called for the filling up of gaps of the highest importance, especially in the domain of public and private credit, of professional morality and of fiscal probity. Had not Catholicism a duty to give its views, to pronounce its judgments, and to give a guiding hand on these heads? When questioned on the matter Cardinal Mercier with the most earnest readiness took steps to assemble in his own palace a few studious minds, Belgian and French to start with, with whom, one by one, collaborators from other nations became associated. The special scope of their studies was to be economic and social, for other Catholics of different countries had been associated together at Freiburg under Mgr. Besson, the eminent Bishop of Lausanne and Geneva, in order to approach the equally urgent problems of international law by the light of Christian principles. In this way the two Unions of Malines and Freiburg, each with its special subject, would continue the work of the first Union at Freiburg, so meritoriously striving for the cause of Christian civilisation.

The Union of Malines has held six sessions up to now, the first taking place in 1920, and the sixth in 1925. The Cardinal presided at all of them, except at that held in 1922 when the session took place at Louvain.

To the Belgian and French members of the first year were added colleagues from Spain, Switzerland, Italy, Holland, England and Austria¹."

Deep down in the nature of man and society are present two attractions, the one in opposition to the other, declared the great Doctor, St. Augustine, thirteen centuries ago. The expansion of these two attractions engenders the antagonism existing between two states of society, and the vicissitudes of this unceasing

¹ Extract from *l'Apostolat social du Cardinal Mercier* by Eugène Duthoit.

antagonism make up what we call history—the history of humanity or civilisation.

One of these attractions is the instinct we call “self-love,” and when this takes a wrong direction it is termed “amour propre” or “egoism.”

The other is the disinterested love of others.

And because St. Augustine was convinced that we cannot love our neighbour sincerely and profoundly unless we see in him a brother, a creature made by God, he defined the two attractions present as “self-love,” which can go to the length of despising God, and “the love of God” which can go to the length of self-effacement and despising oneself when the occasion arises.

In the world there has always been, there still is, and in all likelihood there will be, so long as this world lasts, a fraction of egoists possessing the instinct for personal enjoyment, and the passion for dominating over others, grinding them under their feet, exploiting them and crushing them out for their profit; this is what St. Augustine calls the “evil, earthly society.”

“Nevertheless, we do not believe that to justify labour we must insult capital. Labour has need of capital, just as the latter calls upon the former.

“The partisans of revolutionary syndicates are experiencing the truth of this at the present time; they have organised themselves, less for purposes of defence in cases of injustice than to threaten and attack; the instinct of self-preservation must inevitably lead to the formation of organisations of employers opposed to them; and so it has become no longer a question of a harmonious agreement of interests to secure the prosperity of a common undertaking, but of a hand-to-hand struggle in which success does not always go to him who has most need of it.

“If Socialism had no other object than to organise the property of such and such a social group on a basis

of collectivity it would not present any grave objections—on the condition, of course, that it is not exclusive, and that choosing to take its stand on property held in common it does not condemn in others property held individually.

“Have not the most perfect of us, following the example and patronage of St. Benedict, the poor man of Assisi, St. Dominic, St. Ignatius of Loyola, and St. Francis of Sales, realised this dream of collectivity—each one labouring according to his means and receiving in accordance with his necessities?

“But our religious acted of their own free will.

“Give me minds tempered by the religious ideal, formed in the school of humility, penance and charity, and the collectivity of their instruments of labour and even of their product will of its own accord become a reality which no one will regret; but so long as you have not driven from the human heart the selfish desires of ambition and the enjoyment of its fruits which ferment within you, the claim that each one should enjoy the product of his labour will remain the more ordinary law of our poor humanity.

“The socialists make the great mistake of too often flattering the people, instead of trying to serve them. They flatter them when they laud what is least noble in the heart of man, and lower the level of social questions to a strife of the appetites, pretending to solve the problem by means which can only aggravate it, namely, by antagonising the different classes.

“The social question assumed an acute character in the mind of the working man when, bewildered at witnessing the upheaval in industry brought about by the invention of machinery, and sometimes rendered envious by the huge fortunes he saw being rapidly accumulated without clearly understanding how they originated and what they meant, he became aware of the sudden disproportion between the inferior, and too

often uncertain condition of the proletariat, and the fortunes of certain successful capitalists.

“The wish to rise in the economic scale animating the heart of the working man is a legitimate and a noble one, and the necessity of making himself and his dependents secure against the uncertainties of a precarious and too often miserable existence, is legitimate and even peremptory. Education for his particular trade, the wise arrangement of the conditions of work, institutions to encourage self-help and organisation into syndicates, are so many means of seconding and guiding the ambitions of the workers.

“But those men who, under the pretext of soothing their minds, foment antagonism between the classes, are shamefully deceiving the people. It is like trying to put out a fire by throwing oil on it.

“Whatever they may do—one must have the courage honestly to tell the workers this—the social question, as interpreted by the socialists, will never be completely solved. Whatever they may do the wealth possessed by the public will never be divided up in such a way as to satisfy all needs, or gratify all ambitions.

“Society can never be pacified by organising strife among the members forming it, and antagonism between its interests.”

And because he respected the working man the Cardinal would not flatter him by talking of his rights without mentioning his duties as well. For the law of duty is the foundation of a right.

“As for the new heaven you dimly indicate to me, I hope for it, and look forward to it, but I have a recollection that to those to whom He promised it the good Master never refused a little addition while they were on earth below.

“When I go into a shop I am ready for a little bargaining, and if I am good at it I anticipate that the shopkeeper will not refuse me good value.

“From the Left we hear murmurs of revolution, war cries and threats. ‘Class consciousness,’ they noisily shout, ‘class warfare, the doing away of employers, war on capitalism! Down with the industrial and capitalist régime! Long live lawless and revolutionary syndicalism!’”

“Class consciousness, remarks the author of *La Barricade*, is the constant warfare between those who work with their arms and those who do not, it is the revolt of muscle against the brain, of manual labour against the intelligence.

“Life is not merely a right which I may renounce at my good pleasure. It was given to me to be placed at the service of duty, that is, of my individual perfecting, of the interests of my family, and in a higher degree, of my country; work is imposed upon me to contribute to its maintenance, and if society owes it to itself to protect the worker it is because, in the last resort, it cannot refuse to the individual normal conditions in which to carry out his duty, inasmuch as it has been organised to secure the material perfecting of each of its members.

“They, too, who never use any but harsh words when speaking of the holders of wealth also flatter the working classes.

“Wealth is a good thing; the possession of a reserve of capital is the source from which springs economic progress. Your own good sense, my dear working people, makes this fact easily intelligible to you. If, at a given moment all those who, by the labour of their hands or brains or the rights of inheritance, have accumulated a fortune, were to take it into their heads to bury it in the ground or fritter it away in unproductive pleasure, it would be all up with industry, and the source from which labour springs and the free circulation of money would be vitiated.”

On the other hand, the worker is not a machine. His

brain and arms are the living organs of an intelligent and free being, with moral and religious responsibilities. He is not an isolated being able to subsist by himself, and at liberty to concentrate solely on himself. Under normal conditions the worker is the head of a family, and this family is bound up with further complex organisations, either voluntary or natural, and in the foremost place with the two-fold organisation of country and Church.

These are basic truths of natural law, antecedent to all man-made conventions and are binding on the leaders of industry just as much as on governments, and from them the worker too cannot escape.

"To-day these appear to be simple truths because events have thrown light upon them, but during the greater part of the last century they were obscured; a society which only regarded the worker from the point of view of the so-called liberal, but really liberticide prejudices of the French Revolution, did not understand or even appear to suspect them.

"The socialists were right to protest and react against this state of things just as much as we Catholics, children of Christ and of the Gospel. When socialism seeks to portion out public wealth more equitably, to check the concentration in a few hands, of fortunes so huge that they become practically unwieldy, and to increase inversely in this way the sum total of well-being of those deprived of any means at all it has right on its side. Without perhaps knowing it, it is basing its inspiration on the Gospel which preaches the brotherhood of all the children of men, and holds up to us Christ Jesus, voluntarily poor and bereft of all earthly goods, not as the type which man must reproduce in all its completeness, but as a sublime ideal suggesting to all, rich and poor, a detachment and respect for poverty, if not the desire for it."

But socialism distorted the truths which the Cardinal

helped to spread in the world, and in order to show this he made use of a comparison as was his custom.

“Our feeble human reason is like a horseman more or less under the influence of drink. He sways over, now on the right, now on the left, loses first one stirrup and then the other, and can hardly ever keep upright and firm in the saddle. I do not say he is not capable of accomplishing a portion of his journey without coming to grief; but it would require almost a miracle for him to arrive at his destination without one or two lamentable falls after losing both stirrups and encountering the sudden and violent plunges of his restive steed.

“The socialists have come to the ground in their course. The ill-guided steed, feeling the reins loose on its neck, has taken the bit between its teeth, broken down the barriers in its way, crushed under its feet the passers by, and God knows what ruin it might not have piled up in its passage had not a few cool-headed and energetic men barred its way and compelled it to moderate its headlong course. The sensible and courageous men who put a check to socialism in its devastating course are you Catholics, moulded in the teachings of Christ, animated by His spirit and upheld by His grace.”

But Capital entails its social duties. No more than labour is the possession of property purely and simply a right; it imposes on the owner a function in the universal organism. The right to make a bad use of wealth is a pagan conception; the duty of employing it for oneself and for others is the fundamental idea of justice made clear by Christian morality. The severe words of St. Paul, “*Si quis non vult operari, neque manducet,*” do not attack individual property, but parasitism. The abuse of riches, enabling the strong to exploit the weak, has always been condemned by the Church; her legislation on usury in the Middle Ages

had in reality no other end than to prevent the quick-witted parasite from living at the expense of the powerless worker.

“The Gospel teaches us a very instructive parable: the Master gave a banquet and noticed that the guests were disputing for the first places. He therefore addressed them and said: “When you are invited to a feast do not take the first place lest there be among the guests a more important person than you, and the master of the house be obliged to say to you, ‘give place, you are occupying the seat of another.’”

“The question of places at table is likewise always a burning one. Doubtless most people in our civilised society would take good care, when entering the banqueting room, not to choose one of the chief seats. But how many who sit down with a modest air do not enviously cast their eyes at the seats of those in a more honourable place!

“We are all invited to the banquet of life, not only to the feast of eternal joy later on but to the feast of our present life to-day.

“The Gospel and the Church give their blessing on the spirit of poverty, that is, they recommend to all, rich and poor, to keep their hearts detached from earthly riches; but neither the Gospel nor the Church propose to us destitution as an ideal. St. Paul teaches us to count ourselves happy when we have a sufficiency of this world’s goods. If each one strive by his talent and his uprightness to deserve a higher place than the one he occupies, so much the better; all right-minded people will rejoice; a career is open to all men of goodwill, and social distinctions are never better justified than when they are gained by merit.

“And, if by a stroke of a magic wand I could make all of you, my dear workers, between now and to-morrow, owners of factories, engineers or overseers of works, and if all those for whom you are now working

were to become your employees, do you think that injustice would all at once disappear from the industrial world, and that a universal concert of harmony would succeed the complaints you are making heard to-day?

"You doubt that, is it not so? And so do I.

"And that is a reason why, instead of complaining of each other and casting stones at one another, we should all apply to our own selves in the first place the words of our Divine Saviour: 'Love ye one another, as I also first loved you.'

"Let not the employer say: 'The labour of my employee is a piece of merchandise; I pay for it, and we are quits.'

"Let not the employee say: 'I work because I must live; but if I could enjoy life without having to work I should spend my days doing nothing.'

"Work is for all of us the law of life and the condition of our progress, for him who gives his brain and for him who gives the use of his arms.

"The purpose of our existence is not solely to assure to each one of us conditions most favourable to our personal well-being.

"If this were so, we should not be men, that is, intelligent and free men capable of moral dignity. We should be animals disputing over a morsel of food or some prey, whose instincts go no further than satisfying their need of food, drink, and physical gratification.

"The rights of family, country and Christian society are on a higher level than our own personal satisfaction. These superior interests, which are binding on our conscience, are so many forms of what we call Duty, and Duty comes before everything in an upright conscience. It should occupy the place of honour, and should be the first and foremost of our concerns. The man who elevates self-interest to the first place, and relegates Duty to the second, lowers himself and abdicates his dignity as a man."

The question of educating a man for his trade is a matter that rightly concerns a Pastor.

“In the domain of economics the first task set before seriously minded men is to facilitate the formation of an enlightened body, by means of a thorough grounding, an apprenticeship under careful supervision, and a moral training capable of elevating and strengthening the will and testing the character, which shall arouse higher aspirations among the working classes, and fit them for more remunerative and at the same time, more intelligently directed labour.

“Too long has the Belgian workman been contented with a daily wage on large contracts and huge constructions, on anti-hygienic labour in the mines and glass factories. His educators should make him conceive and desire a higher ideal—mechanical and electrical industries, the manufacture of instruments of precision, and the decorative arts, for which our country has too generally gone to the foreigner.

“An enlightened body of thoroughly grounded workers would increase the average productivity of Belgium, would add to the well-being of the people without bringing friction or clashing of interests, and would effectively contribute to the restoration of our national prosperity.”

The Chaplains of Labour, who gained their experience at Charleroi and Antwerp, have opened professional schools under the auspices of the Archbishop, and these have rendered the greatest services.

Instruction in professional and domestic economy, study circles, workmen's leagues, Christian syndicates, thrift societies, women's social work, agricultural societies, Catholic associations of manufacturers and engineers, and the training of priests set apart to direct these different activities formed the subject of unceasing solicitude on the part of the Archbishop.

His activity in every domain was very great.

Nothing human was foreign to him. He found time for everything, and no task seemed too mean or too commonplace when any soul might derive relief and peace from his intervention.

If a man must be very intelligent to be very good, one may well say that the Cardinal practised in a supreme degree that goodness—charity, of which he loved to speak. Like St. John in his old age he would often repeat: “Little children, love one another.” This was the key to his fruitful apostolate.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAN OF GOD

The Cardinal's attractive personality. A picture of the Cardinal. His humility, and great intellectual powers. His force as a speaker. His apartments at the Archbishop's Palace. His accessibility and the universal affection he inspired.

IF we seek to discover the pervading motive of Cardinal Mercier's life we find it in his ever present submission to the Divine Will. The secret of it was that he abandoned himself to God's good pleasure, and considered everything in its aspects to eternity. He owed his disposition first and foremost to his saintly mother: "I owe to her anything good in me," he used to say. She taught him forgetfulness of self and that disinterested love which reigned in the household at Braine l'Alleud in such large measure. On the other hand, his passion for real knowledge soon grew to be the instrument of his apostolate. To become wiser in order to have greater influence in order to do more good, were his sole pre-occupations.

He possessed an extraordinary power of attracting people. Tall, thin, and spare in frame, his smile charmed, and his words held authority. People were captivated by the restrained elegance of his manners, and dominated by his accurate and vast knowledge, and

his way of speaking which was very flexible, well coordinated, logical, and full of simplicity.

One seemed to be greeting a man who fascinated. One was really in the presence of an intellectual giant who by the exercise of a very gentle art and closely-reasoned argument led you to share his convictions!

He had his moments of the greatest geniality, and knew how to use a gentle irony with much *finesse*. His words were never wounding. They slipped in naturally and without effort between two reflections—and this gave them their full point. Here is an example :

Mgr. Mercier liked to be surrounded by young priests ; people felt some surprise at this, but no one ventured to remark on it. Nevertheless a young Canon, twenty-nine years of age, was rash enough to say to him a little time after his consecration as Archbishop : “ Monseigneur, do you know what people call your Palace ? ‘ The House of Innovation ’ ! ” And Monseigneur answered this priest from Namur, whose Bishop was rarely at home : “ Do you know what people say of the Bishop of Namur’s Palace ? ‘ House to let ’ ! ”

He had exquisite humility ; since flattering homage was unceasingly offered to him he made up his mind to accept it. But when he found himself confronted by journalists he begged them as a favour not to make any mention of him. “ You will understand,” he would say, “ that when one hears such flattering eulogies paid to one’s person, one is bound to feel a certain amount of embarrassment. I remember reading in one of St. Augustine’s homilies that he confessed to having the same sentiment : ‘ If I impose silence I run the risk of making others appear ungracious and indifferent ; if I accept them I risk making myself vain. The solution I have adopted is to recognise the generosity of those who speak well of my person and to reserve any deeper signification to the judgment of God.’ ”

Humility is not that kind of puerile, forced, and (at



THE CARDINAL'S STUDY

Herneven, Bruxelles

bottom) hypocritical convention, constraining a man to the practice of an assumed ignorance of the divine liberality of which he is the recipient from above, and to an apparent abdication of himself from shyness or a false attitude.

It consists in loyalty to truth and a right balance in the moral order, because by putting man in his proper place it regulates his thoughts and affections in the sight of God, both as concerning himself and others.

From this happy mingling of influences results the perfect man, a man gifted in a rare degree with that quality considered by St. Thomas Aquinas as the master quality in men fitted to govern—the *discretio rationis*, the sense of due proportion.

We might apply to the Archbishop what St. Jeanne Françoise Chantal said of St. Francis of Sales: "He was remarkable for his prudence; he was never seen to do anything lightly, or with that haste which confuses itself by being too precipitate, and stifles reflection; before acting or speaking he always reflected upon what he was going to do or say, and asked the advice of others whenever he could; above all he prayed, expecting much more light from God than from his own mind. As discreet in speech as in action, no one ever heard him say what was not to the point."

It has been said that the mighty ones of the earth as a rule combine material strength with feebleness of will. This is the reason why they have only two means of convincing—pleading and violence, and that is why they make a noise like parrots imitating thunder as in the story by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. But there is only one kind of thunder which is able to silence chatterers and overcome the violent, and that is Truth. Those who bear Truth in their hands have no need to raise their voices; they have only to address the crowd, and the Barbarians will retire. In the old, old struggle between Rome and Caesar, to win to-day only to lose to-morrow

is the destiny of Caesar. What can armies do against a doctrine which is inaccessible, which judges all things with all its rigour, but with all its tranquillity?

“International life, which is perhaps a form of European disorder, has already many times afforded me the honour of meeting some of those who are called ‘men of the moment,’ or ‘leaders of the world,’” wrote a modern author. “Up till now they all seemed to justify the remark of the great Albert de Haller of Berne, to Casanova, when the latter visited him. It was uttered at a time when people went to Switzerland to see men rather than scenery. Casanova therefore went to pay a visit to the illustrious poet of the Alps, and when taking his leave told him that he would conclude his journey among the dwellers in the Alps with a visit to Ferney. ‘You are going to see M. de Voltaire?’ asked Haller; ‘He contradicts the laws of physics; he is greater at a distance than when seen near at hand. The greatness of events, and the littleness of men! That is why we are crushed under foot.’

“The world of to-day has lost confidence in the future, because it no longer holds the notion of eternity. But calm reigns at the Vatican and at Malines; the interior peace we have lost is diffused and shed around there, bathing everything in an atmosphere of suavity and serenity, and one can realise the words of Isaias: ‘He who has faith need not hasten.’

“Hence arises all that urbanity, simplicity, indulgence and gentleness. At a distance I had pictured the Cardinal as being almost awe-inspiring, a St. John Chrysostom withstanding Byzantine Emperors, and still bearing the marks of their persecutions. When, after mounting an unlighted staircase, I saw standing in the embrasure of the doorway his tall form, whose features I could not yet distinguish, I was almost afraid. But what was my astonishment in discovering a St. Francis of Sales!

“ With a benevolent gesture he bent forward his lofty form and appeared in the deprecating attitude of humble self-effacement. The ascetic features of his lean countenance lighted up with a broad smile, and his eyes expressed such extreme kindness and such intelligent sympathy that forthwith I was conquered.

“ When he came to give utterance to some noble ideal, of a sudden he would draw himself up, gleams of youthful impetuosity would shoot from his eyes, his broad forehead seemed to be glowing, and his whole being gave forth an irresistible suggestion of confidence and fire.

“ The passing years have given him the gentle dignity of white hair; prayer and meditation have still further hollowed his features and added a deeper look to his glance; the consciousness of the authority with which he is invested has imprinted on his movements the elegance of sovereign majesty; he has lost nothing of that engaging youthfulness, the spirit of which he communicates to all who approach him.

“ This lends to his speech a charm the secret of which it is hard to discover, for in the *timbre* of his voice there is nothing musical, a rather hurried delivery adds little to what he says, and his gestures are jerky and lack gracefulness. One requires to read his written speeches to discover their fine literary tenour, which has been rendered still more graceful by long practice. But these discourses possess a moving intensity which may not be resisted, and are animated by a vigour of conviction and an energy of resolve which carry away the hearer. If in the discussion of ideas he succeeds in awakening intense interest, this is not due solely to the justice and logic of his views—cold qualities, appealing only to reflected judgment—but rather to the original and personal turn he knew how to give to them.”¹

¹ Miles, in *Le Correspondant*, 10th February, 1916.

To give a better understanding of his personality I will give the testimony of Albert Besnard, as profound a psychologist as a painter :

“ On the 31st December, 1915, great was my surprise at the sudden entry into this old and other world *à partement* of a man still young, and of lofty stature, lean and spare but at the same time supple as a woman, with a small fair head like a Rubens. A large lock of fair hair went from the left temple round his very striking forehead and fell over the right ear. The glance from his blue eyes was very gentle but, at the same time, bright. His lips were full coloured and expressive, in spite of having been slightly marred owing to a motor car accident. But the distinguishing mark of his countenance was his long and narrow nose falling straight and firm from a very round forehead to the mouth. Wladimir Ghika introduced me.

“ To be in readiness I had provided myself with paper and *crayons*, as I did on the occasion of my first sketch of the Pope, and as soon as we were seated I set about making a drawing of my splendid model. I perceived at once that I should have to exercise great care and close observation. The sitting ended after three-quarters-of-an-hour, but I extracted a promise of another at an early date.

“ Returning to the Academy I outlined a sketch in which I placed the Cardinal standing before his desk littered with papers. In his left hand he was holding his famous Pastoral, and a pen in his right. In the background, through an open window, Louvain was seen in flames—that Louvain he held so tenderly in his memory, for it was there in the Library, that he had made his *début* as Professor of Philosophy and sacred history. He had afterwards directed these studies, but he always considered the Library as the familiar home wherein his special bent had been formed. The dramatic scene with which I surrounded him suggested to me the

introduction of an apparition of the Saviour with His arms in the form of a Cross, accentuating the notion of imploring, and expressing the horror of the Christian world at this devastation and martyrdom of Belgium. Meanwhile I made other sketches of him in different attitudes; and finally came to studying his hands. They were long, well shaped and dominated by a commanding thumb. Naturally I was led to compare them with those of the Pope (Benedict XV) which were exceptionally fat, soft and white, and whose face was characterised by sharp folds, giving marked shadows to its abrupt contours. In striking contrast the man facing me showed a face modelled in a perfect oval of broad and simple lines. His features offered no want of harmony, and no shadows, but in his blue eyes there was great alertness or rather watchfulness. This became apparent after making a close study, for at first sight, his long and supple frame seemed to owe its graceful carriage to something feminine in its flexibility. But the two hands by their gesture and shape, showed power, just as his straight uncurving nose gave evidence of ideas brought to a practical reality without hesitation. All this too was indicated by his well defined thumb. Here we have two different kinds of hands contrasting each other: that of the Pope is feminine, in conjunction with a face which might denote force; that of the Cardinal, perfect in shape and firm in contour reveals unusual energy, while his face at first sight only gives evidence of goodness and gentleness."

The portrait executed by Albert Besnard is very well-known. It is one of the best of those which have been painted, and these are numerous, for the Cardinal rarely refused an audience or a favour. It was not without occasional protest that his entourage, rightly concerned for his health, saw him so often engaged with indiscreet or troublesome people, but the Cardinal, who might have had the most justifiable reasons to complain and

to protect himself, was always the first to plead in their favour.

His heart was as good as his head. Intellectually and morally Cardinal Mercier dwelt on the mountain tops; nothing base even grazed him. But in spite of his profound knowledge, and his honours, pride never touched him. Conscious of living in such an exalted atmosphere he was only the more turned towards moral and material human misery.

His childhood had been passed in the village with his widowed mother who was occupied with the care of her family under the reverses of fortune; she had given him a close insight into the lives of humble folk, into their hardships and miseries; it might be said that his soul had been permanently moulded in sympathy with them; his piety, his profound knowledge of the spirit of Christianity, and later on his full appreciation of the duties imposed upon him by his high official position, rendered his heart will more widely open to kindness and pity. A foreign Prelate who often visited the Cardinal said: "Every time I had dealings with the Cardinal I was at loss to know what I should admire most in him, the loftiness of his mind, or the tenderness of his heart." A foreign writer, speaking of a visit he had made to His Eminence, made a note that of all the celebrated people he had seen he had never felt the impression in such a striking degree of being in the presence of a truly great man as when he was talking to the Cardinal. No Prince of the Church ever wore the robes of a Cardinal with greater dignity and prestige; when the tall, slim form in scarlet mantle, dominated by the fine profile and noble brow of the thinker, rose conspicuous from the midst of a procession, solemn ceremony, or popular assembly, it was a sight full of real majesty, and aroused deep respect and admiration. But the Cardinal's profound glance was so gentle, and his lips so ready with a smile of affable welcome that even

the most shy had no fear of approaching him; in any conversation at a chance meeting, or at an audience, the Cardinal at once placed everyone at their ease by his unaffected and delicate cordiality. Yet all the time, through that veil of gentleness, his gaze seemed to penetrate right through one so that one's innermost being and most secret thoughts were laid bare. No one could dare to lie to the Cardinal.

What a host of people in every condition of life came to confide all sorts of troubles to him! "Well, we will go and see the Cardinal," was often the great solution when anyone was at the end of his resources, and he always came away from a visit enlightened and set on the road to recovery, or at any rate, consoled and resigned.

"To love is to wish to benefit. I should like to see you all happy," he would say. "I do so greatly desire to contribute to your well-being. And by that I mean not only your eternal welfare, but also your happiness here on earth—each is bound up in the other. Earthly happiness is only an anticipation of heaven."

So too, midst the inevitable contradictions arising among Catholics in every branch of life, "we will go and see the Cardinal" was the solution which ended in these differences being reconciled. When he had spoken it was only very rarely that anyone did not accept what he had said. On the two days on which he received each week the ante-chamber in the Palace was filled with visitors of every condition and class, and he would not allow anyone to leave without granting an interview. For this purpose he often prolonged his audiences, even on fast days, to well after the hour for his meals, drying the tears, calming the passions and alleviating the misfortunes of his visitors. He never entrusted to others his visits to the poor, which as far as possible he made without mentioning them, and with the greatest discretion. The people of Malines more than once surprised

him in the neighbourhood of the Palace accompanied by a priest, carrying the Sacraments to a sick or dying person, more often than not to some unfortunate being. When in the exercise of his functions he was called to some locality in his diocese, or even to another part of the country, he always tried to find time to visit any priest or friend if he had heard that he was seriously ill. People remember that during the war he often went to see the families of workmen who had been deported, and lavished on them relief and consolation.

His great and pitying heart, and his keen, eagle-like insight had made him the head of the diocese, the Primate of the Church in Belgium, and such a modern and up-to-date Cardinal. He understood the times in which he was living, their needs and their aspirations. He knew how to separate what was good in them, to disentangle anything surviving from the past that had become superannuated or useless, or that might be allowed to drop out, and substituted in its place fresh adaptations of the truth, and accommodations which would respect what was essential and only change what was adventitious. He did not shrink when necessary from coming up against routine, prejudices, and obstacles—once the line of duty had been traced out, nothing stopped him. He had something in him of those great American Bishops—Ireland and Gibbons—who amazed us by their direct, personal and, we might almost say, familiar participation in the daily life of their fellow citizens, in their habits, and in their hopes, in so far as they were upright and compatible with priestly sanctity and the dignity of a Bishop.

“ I travel by motor car because it is the only means of locomotion by which I am enabled to talk to the workmen in Antwerp at mid-day, and to visit a hostel for the aged in Les Polders at Strabroeck, at four o'clock. Where is the harm ? ”

The form and tenour of his words when speaking as

a Bishop arrested attention the first time anyone heard them. What force, what firmness, what grandeur there was in his sober style when occasion demanded! The Cardinal was so well able to mingle good sense with lofty flights. He made people think, and aroused their emotions when he spoke, no matter where he might be. We have seen him achieve the real success of a public orator when addressing meetings of young people or working men, yet all the time what he had been saying had never ceased to be restrained and just. But restraint and justice do not exclude that warmth of accent in which firm conviction and thought may be expressed. Beneath his wonderful serenity which never belied itself even under the most disconcerting circumstances, the Cardinal concealed an ardent soul always under the control of his will, the well-regulated echo of which often rose to his lips, and in a breath of great sentiments or under the sway of great resolves he allowed it to communicate its vibrating waves in full diapason.

Beneath the lofty tower of St. Rombaut, whence the carillon spread its joyful tones over the town, there is a little quiet square, and a door like that of a monastery, and then through a few white corridors we come to the staircase leading to the Archbishop's palace. No palace was ever more humble.

Here it was that the thoughts of Cardinal Mercier kept watch and ward, here his gravely spoken words welcomed the visitor, to instruct and comfort, here glowed his ardent heart.

We visited recently the private apartments of the Cardinal, and the huge study where he worked, the walls of which are hidden behind shelves loaded with books, and the room alongside in which he wrote his Pastorals and the vast quantity of work flowing from his indefatigable pen. In a corner may be seen the *prie-dieu* where he knelt in prayer for long hours on

end; it still bears on the kneeler the visible marks of its constant use.

And his bedroom? We might call it rather the cell of a monk. In the face of that austere poverty hidden under the outward pomp necessary to his functions as a Cardinal, one cannot refrain from a feeling of profound stupefaction. What other man would have contented himself with this comfortless white-washed bedroom, rather large it is true, but striking one immediately by the well-nigh absolute bareness of its walls and absence of furniture?

Against the wall at the end is a small iron bedstead, with no springs nor mattress and a coarse palliase, on which he was buried, in order that he might sleep his last sleep in poverty. Above the head hangs a copper crucifix and a reproduction of Fra Angelico's "Annunciation"; at the side is a medallion-shaped reliquary, a souvenir of his sister, Marie Madeleine, who had been a Poor Clare.

Facing the bed is a low pitch-pine washstand, the large looking-glass of which he had removed, considering it to be an object of luxury, and had replaced by a common little mirror.

In a corner is a cupboard for hanging *soutanes*; further off is an old-fashioned portmanteau, and a few miserable looking cane chairs, brought from Louvain twenty years earlier, complete the miscellaneous furniture of its poor occupant.

But on the bare chimney-piece, standing under a Head of Christ is a Madonna, and this lights up all the poor surroundings. It represents Marie Médiatrice, so greatly loved by her faithful child, whom she called to be her servant on the day sacred to her.

This statue is now in the Chapel of the Cardinal Mercier College at Braine l'Alleud, where it is an object of great veneration.

To say that he lived like a saint may seem superfluous.

The advice he gave, the discourses he delivered, and the writings he poured forth bear witness to a life of intimate mystical experience, lived in austere recollection. His piety was nourished on an active interior life. The ideal inspiring him was one based on the most traditional Catholic essence, but it was human also in a generous degree, and imbued with youthful enthusiasm for nature, life, and a knowledge of all things that are born under the sun of a bountiful God.

In his written reflections we have often come upon the kind of poetry and faith combined which make the charm of a Francis Jammes or a Paul Claudel.

When compared with the principalities and powers of this world, this Prince of the Church led the life of an ascetic.

Rising at 5 a.m. the Cardinal betook himself at all seasons, even in the depth of winter, to his private chapel, and kneeling upright at his *prie-dieu* immersed himself in prayer for an hour. At the end of this long meditation he celebrated Mass with a gentle and profound gravity, followed by a thanksgiving of a quarter-of-an-hour.

He would then take his morning collation and at the same time begin to run through his voluminous correspondence; he sorted it out and made a few pencil notes, thanks to which his Vicars-General and his secretaries when they arrived soon after would find letters and documents connected with all branches of the administration already distributed in the proper quarter.

If he was not giving an audience, and when his duties did not call for him outside, he isolated himself all the morning and afternoon in his vast working study, the only decoration of which was a library of selected books admirably classified.

He lunched about mid-day at no definitely fixed hour,

which varied according to whether he had finished some work on which he was engaged, or had concluded his audiences; his very frugal repast was merely a detail necessary to his life, not an event.

The audiences, held regularly on Wednesdays and Fridays, but often overflowing on to other days, lasted for an interminable time, to such an extent that they sometimes delayed the Cardinal's lunch to two o'clock and even later. His deep sense of courtesy and his extreme kindness refused to allow him to send away or put off visitors who had been waiting in the ante-chamber. He was always besieged with visitors. Important and humble people alike thronged the waiting-rooms. No foreigner of any note, when passing through Belgium, would fail to offer his homage to Cardinal Mercier, so world-wide was his renown.

At five o'clock he would hold his council at the Vicar-General's office, and have a lengthy conference with his collaborators in the administration of the diocese.

After a modest evening meal he would return to the Chapel where he had celebrated Mass in the morning, and prolong his visit to the Blessed Sacrament in a loving heart-to-heart talk with his Master.

Tourists who mounted to the top of the tower of St. Rombaut, from whence the view looks straight down into the garden of the Archbishop's palace, would often see the illustrious Prelate on a fine evening walking round the lawns and flower beds reciting his breviary.

From the outside as well as the inside, the living portion of the Palace looks like a huge monastery possessing no other attribute of luxury except cleanliness; not a shadow of any ostentation, but only the simplicity befitting true greatness.

From time to time the Cardinal would manage to tear himself away from the harassing fatigues of official

business for a few days of retirement in his modest country house, a mere *pied-à-terre* which he owned in the commune where he was born, in the little hamlet of l'Ermite, buried away in the green and picturesque spot where formerly stood the ancient Abbey of Sept-Fontaines. *Parva domus, magna quies*. It stirred up in the mind of His Eminence memories of Christian joys, but also the memory of his brother, Dr. Léon Mercier, who died there in his arms. He would spend his time in study and prayer, and it was there that he wrote the greater part of his most important works, in particular his *Vie Intérieure*. "His distraction," said an old priest of the neighbourhood to a journalist who had come in search of copy, "was to play at being Curé." He liked to help the parish priest in his pastoral duties, visiting the sick and going anywhere where the call to help souls might require him.

The Cardinal was gifted with an extraordinary capacity and facility for work; his activity partook of the marvellous. He spent himself without stint, and if in the course of one day he was able to go from one extremity of his diocese to the other he owed this, wrote Canon Caeymaex, less to speedy means of locomotion than to the flame of zeal consuming him. But what most struck this judicious observer, and rightly so, was his mastery over himself, his perfect self-control, his imperturbable serenity, his never failing optimism, and his complete realisation of that well-known recipe for eloquence: "To possess oneself while letting oneself go, and to let oneself go while possessing oneself." A man of prayer, he sought and found in union with God through Christ that secret of fruitful and well-ordered activity which spends itself naturally without dissipating itself, and which can spread itself abroad all the more widely because it is more deeply immersed in its source, which is God.

To his clergy, who were his chief concern, he recom-

mended that they should live the interior life for their own personal sanctification and for the edification of Christians. "We call it interior because we see it springing forth from its source, from the mysterious depths of Him who is the Soul of our soul; we contemplate it through and beyond all the sensible and supra-sensible manifestation of our natural faculties in the most inner recesses of the substance of our being—the interchanging of the divine *largesse* on the one hand, and on the other the interchanging life of union with God which reaches to complete unity, according to the declaration of St. Paul the Apostle.

How often do we hear people in the Flemish provinces say of a priest: "Dat is een echte priester", and the Walloon in his rough tongue translate the same idea in these words: "Ça, c'est un prêtre", "Çà c'est un Curé!" What is the meaning for us of this description given by our faithful people?

What is within fashions the external aspect. The constant practice of the interior life imprints on the countenance, bearing, speech and look the reflection of God's action on the soul, and a harmony is established between what is and what ought to be; fact and the resulting law, reality and the promise, practical sanctity and vocation respond to each other, and religious minded people, on seeing this even equilibrium, rest contentedly in the contemplation of the complete oneness of a moral being, and see God shining forth in the work of His hands, and Christ appearing through His minister, and exclaim: "Yes, he is easily recognisable by everyone as a man of God, a priest of the Lord!"

No one can remain insensible to the sight of a life wholly one, logical, and always at peace with itself. And when that life is no mere trivial unrolling of human acts, but is the revelation to humanity of God and His Christ, it is the most impressive form that preaching the Gospel can take.

Father Rutten asks : " How could he find the time to write so many books, he who was the director of so many consciences, who took part in so many religious activities, attended so many meetings, presided at so many solemn functions, and recently had to knock at so many doors to collect the necessary funds for building his Higher Institute of Philosophy, and his Leo XIII Seminary ? "

The virtuous habits springing from severe self-discipline galvanise the mind and will by concentrating all the vital forces towards an ideal which becomes more and more well defined by the practice of recollection. In this way a man comes to dominate almost completely his imagination and senses, transforming them into instruments becoming ever more supple and more active in the service of the mind. After a time what may be called an impressive immaterialisation characterises and crowns the long efforts made by men who have lived for truth and duty alone.

When the Cardinal was praying, robed in his pontifical vestments, with eyes lowered and hands joined together in a beautiful priestly attitude, one might have taken him for some mediæval pontiff who had stepped down from an old triptych in one of our ancient Cathedrals. If he had reached the age of Leo XIII he would have borne a strange resemblance to that osseous, parchment-like, well-nigh mummified old man whose whole vitality was concentrated in his eyes which startled a visitor by the brilliancy and depth of their gaze.

At the church of St. Augustine at Antwerp a stained glass window shows the Cardinal in the attitude of adoration. The artist, Steyaert, has been successful in giving to his eyes that wonderful look which suffused them and, by the aid of colour and sunlight, in rendering the mysterious virtue which emanated from his countenance.

Profundity of thought, and an inexhaustible well of sensibility formed the two poles of attraction which won the heart of the crowd, so rarely do we see united in such a high degree those eminent virtues which they predicate.

PART II

*THE HERO DURING THE GREAT CRISIS
OF THE WAR*

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST YEAR OF THE GERMAN OCCUPATION

The Invasion of Belgium. The Cardinal goes to Rome to the Conclave to elect a successor to Pope Pius X. The Bombardment of Malines. Von der Goltz and the Cardinal. Von Bissing's relations with the Cardinal. The Cardinal Archbishop of Cologne. Cardinal Mercier's Pastoral Letter "Patriotism and Endurance" gives great offence to Von Bissing. The Cardinal's spirited defence. Von Bissing's action; correspondence. The Cardinal's intrepid stand against the German demands, and to the Censorship of his correspondence. Incidents of the Occupation.

"WHEN the scandalous consecration of brute force brings success in its train, even though but a temporary one, in some resounding violation of moral right and law, one of the most reassuring spectacles that can be offered by history is the magnanimous attitude of the Spiritual Power in resisting injustice triumphant, without fear or bravado, by the peremptory affirmation of truths that have been despised, thereby ranging the force of right against the right of force.

"Belgium, for example, realised this spectacle over a century ago when Maurice de Broglie, Bishop of Ghent, was proscribed, first for having defended the prerogatives of the Apostolic See in the matter of Episcopal appointments against the tyranny of Napoleon, and a second time for having upheld against the Protestant

Government of the Low Countries under William I of Holland the right of ecclesiastics and religious to teach.

“Germany too witnessed this same spectacle from 1837 to 1841 when Clement Auguste of Drostezu Vischering, Archbishop of Cologne, after being imprisoned for four years, won for the Bishops the right to control in matters of doctrine the official professors teaching Catholic theology, and liberty to resume normal relationship between the Prussian Episcopacy and Rome.

“Still more memorable was the unanimous resistance, beginning in 1873, by which the Catholic Bishops, such as Melchers of Cologne, Foerster of Breslau, Ledochowski of Posen, and Eberhard of Treves, braving imprisonment and exile finally triumphed over the Bismarckian persecution of the Kulturkampf. In 1879, on the hospitable soil of Catholic Belgium, died one of the Bishops proscribed by Bismarck; he was that ardent champion of the Infallibility of the Pope, and intractable defender of the rights of the Church—Conrad Martin of Paderborn. Like Gregory VII he had loved justice, and hated iniquity; that was why he died in exile. But the cause of right was avenged. Soon afterwards the all-powerful founder of the new German Empire had to go himself to Canossa.

“To-day Germany and Belgium are again witnesses of a stirring struggle in which the representative of the Spiritual Power is confronting an unjust conquest and oppression with the solemn protest which frees men’s consciences.”¹

On the night of the 2/3 August, 1914, the Council of Ministers assembled under the Presidency of the King, drew up the reply to the ultimatum sent by the forsworn enemy whose brutality was threatening the independence of the country.

“If a foreigner violates our territory,” was the answer of Albert I, “he will find all Belgians grouped around

¹ Yves de la Brière : *Les Etudes*, 5th to 20th February, 1915.

their Sovereign and the Government, which is invested with the absolute confidence of the nation.

“ I have faith in our destinies.

“ A country which defends itself gains the respect of all ; this country will not perish.

“ God will be with us in this just cause.

“ Long live independent Belgium ! ”

Men of character, men able to stand up in the midst of their fellows, are the exception ; the majority of human beings prefer to spare themselves the difficulties entailed in a struggle, meekly following the line of least effort. And as every example arouses imitation, just as seeing people applauding, shouting, laughing, and gesticulating, so men assembled in a crowd draw on each other, and from their contact arise events which the mere addition of their individual wills could not have produced or explained. Every perception, every image, every idea starts some action—this is one of the fundamental laws of psychology—the action in its turn suggests the image or the idea which had given birth to it, and in this way intensifies the collective action.

A hero, a historic figure in the true sense of the term, is a man who arises during some crisis in the history of the world to arrest or turn aside by a striking and possibly unconscious attitude the course of events, like the epic hero Ulysses bending his bow, or Roland sounding his horn. Of the small band of heroes of this type who have shone in history, several have been soldiers, but a remarkable proportion were priests. Of such were St. Ambrose of Milan, St. Thomas of Canterbury, and the Pope who defied Attila, and of such too was the great Cardinal who defied the modern Huns in the name of Belgian liberty. The centuries will roll by, wrote Chesterton, and the details of the Great War will fall into oblivion like the incidents of other periodical and numerous invasions of the same tribes over the same frontiers. And possibly posterity will hardly trouble to remember

that the forgotten name of the principal of these tribes was Prussia, any more than most of us will trouble to know whether such persecuting pagans were Visigoths or Ostrogoths. The impious invasion of Belgium and all the names of the invaders will have been absorbed by one great name running through History—the Barbarians. But just as men will remember Roland without recalling the names of the Saracens, or Arthur without calling up the names of the Saxons, future generations contemplating the long avenues of the past will always see there one solitary figure rising above a shapeless mass—a priest defying an army.

“When, during the months of that terrible summer of 1914,” Louis Madelin wrote in moving terms, “we received any European news on the front where we were fighting, the name of Cardinal Mercier was one of those we hailed. *Poilus* who certainly did not know the name of their Bishop or even that of their Curé, soon learnt that of the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines. They learnt that in Belgium which had been invaded by an unheard-of violation of the rights of the people, maltreated by German *reiters* enraged at the resistance they were offering, trodden under foot, covered with blood, and soon to be deprived of its civil and military leaders, of its army and of its King, a man had risen up who, standing between these modern Barbarians and the oppressed people, had raised his arm aloft to withstand the former and protect the latter. We thought we could see the tall form of the Primate of Belgium outlined in the sky shot with blood-red gleams. In the eyes of all Europe—and to use the old word which quite naturally rose in our thoughts—of Christianity, the Prelate combined the Incarnation of Right and of Charity.

“In the isolation in which we lived, hardly ever receiving any news and not even having heard of the disasters of August, or even of the battle of the Marne save from chance rumours, everything seemed to us at

the time to be invested with some mysterious and almost supernatural glamour. Unable to follow the history which we ourselves were actually making, we had the impression of living a legendary life—a life in which horror was mingled with grandeur, in which stood out almost superhuman personalities of marvellous nobility.

“The Cardinal of Malines was one of these. I remember that we heard at Fort Douaumont of the death of Pope Pius X and of the convocation of a Conclave, and I heard a comrade say, one who certainly had not interested himself in religious affairs before the war: ‘All the better; they cannot refuse a safe conduct to Cardinal Mercier, and he will go to Rome and tell them how the Boches are behaving in Belgium and on our front!’” It was not only in regard to his own flock that he appeared to us in the light of a Guardian Angel, but also in regard to all the oppression, the trampling under foot, and the massacres being perpetrated by Germany.

“We heard that he had started for Rome, and we said: ‘Poor Belgians, what will they undergo now that Cardinal Mercier is no longer there!’ We almost held our breath for our Belgian friends until his return.

“It is difficult for a historian to keep away from the past. In some of us it may even be considered a kind of fault to be always recalling to the present the images presented by the past and, in the case of the humble sergeant in the advance posts at Verdun that I then was, to find that the historian cannot die. It is therefore not surprising that the Archbishop of Malines appeared to me in the guise of those great Bishops who withstood the Barbarians in the fifth century, sheltering the Christian communities under their mantles, and raising aloft their wooden croziers like some shepherd’s crook, seeking to save their sheep. I seemed to see another St. Lupus of Troyes confronting Attila and successfully intimidating the terrible King of the Huns. Everything had crumbled away in Gaul; the chiefs of the Gallo-Latin

cities, the Roman magistrates, the members of the Curiae, the officers of the Empire, and the soldiers of Rome had disappeared. In the great whirlwind of invasion the Bishops of Christ alone had remained standing upright. From being apostles these men had suddenly become heads of cities, protectors of the people, magistrates and administrators. They were the defenders against the Barbarians—Visigoths, Vandals, Sicambri, Burgundians, and Huns. Many were valiant men; on their heads they wore no helmet but the mitre, and on their breasts the linen tunic and pallium of wool; in their hand was no sword, but the light crozier of white wood, the *bâton* of the apostle, which was to become the frail weapon of right. They presented themselves before the Barbarians accompanied by a few trembling clerics; they went up to the savage hordes without fear, and stopped the horse of the terrible chief; they spoke in the name of God and of humanity; in the face of abuse and sometimes brutal treatment they went on speaking, and such was the authority emanating from their two-fold character as priests of God and protectors of the people that many a time they warded off from their flock the hideous menace that had made it quake with fear. People have often asked themselves on what the fidelity of the people to the Church in the Middle Ages was based; there can be but little doubt that one of its most solid foundations was the memory handed down from generation to generation of the part assumed by the Bishops of Gaul at times when all other authority had collapsed.

“Cardinal Mercier in the full glare of the twentieth century revived the memory of a typical Bishop of the fifth century, and this striking resemblance surrounded him in my eyes with a halo of light.”

The following is an account from the pen of the Cardinal of the first days of the occupation :

“Just when the enemy were penetrating the heart of

our country we were called to Rome to take part in the Conclave and election of a successor to our greatly loved and greatly regretted Pope, the saintly Pius X.

“A special carriage had been placed at our disposal at the railway station of Malines by the Government. Accompanied by Canon Vrancken, our private secretary, we took our departure by way of Termonde and Ghent at one o'clock on Thursday, the 20th August.

“An hour later a German patrol had reached the railway track between Malines and Termonde and cut the traffic.

“On the evening of the same day we arrived at Lille, whence we left for Paris, Modane, Genoa and Rome. We arrived there in time for the imposing obsequies celebrated for the repose of the soul of the dead Pontiff, which were doubly mournful in this tragic hour of our history.

“During the Conclave, which opened on Monday, the 31st August, we were walking one day in the Raphael Colonnade in company with Cardinal Vico, our former Nuncio in Brussels, when news came to us that the University of Louvain and the College buildings of St. Pierre were in flames; the telegram added that the enemy were bombarding our Cathedral and Archbishop's House.

“It was a most poignant moment for us, and even those who now read these lines, written eight years ago, will understand it. We were living in an atmosphere of mourning in the grave preoccupation of electing a new Pope; we were three hundred leagues away from our flock and our dearly loved, stricken country, and the only rumour that came to us spoke of nothing but conflagrations and ruins.

“Kindly Providence, however, Who never abandons those who put their trust in Him, did not allow discouragement to overtake me; the only reply I made to my companion after a minute's reflection was at the dictate

of faith and hope : ' They have destroyed ; well, we will build again.'

" There was no will to hate, no passion for revenge in our resistance, an account of which will be found in the following pages and in others published separately in a volume entitled *Correspondance avec le Pouvoir occupant*. There was purely and simply the desire to see justice respected, and the unshakable conviction that tolerant gentleness would be a weakness which could only be exercised at the expense of truth.

" And so we always reminded our clergy of St. Augustine's spiritual precept, '*Nihil praeferendum honestati*,' that is, 'honour, meaning the respect for truth and right, is above everything.'

" The election of Pope Benedict XV took place on Thursday, the 3rd September, and his solemn coronation on Sunday, the 6th September. On the evening of that solemnity we left Rome accompanied by the French Cardinals, Amette of Paris, Luçon of Rheims, and Andrieux of Bordeaux ; we went by way of Genoa, Marseilles and Paris.

" On the 8th September, the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, we made a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de la Garde at Marseilles, and celebrated Mass with ever the same intention, that of calling down the blessing of Heaven on our cause, and on our dear country.

" We renewed our promise to the Miraculous Virgin to employ ourselves in causing Her to be honoured as the Mediatrix of the human race.

" When we had descended from the holy mount the newspapers brought us the first gleam of hope to shoot across our darkened sky—the cessation of Joffre's retreat on the Marne.

" On that same evening of the 8th September we left Paris, afterwards making a stop at Havre, where we embarked for Southampton and London.

“On Monday, the 14th September, we landed at Antwerp, and next day, on the morning of the 15th, we had the consolation of being in Malines again.

“We say ‘consolation,’ but it was only a *façon de parler*, for the sombre aspect of the deserted city, the rents in the walls of our Episcopal dwelling, the heaped-up litter in the great nave and throughout the entire precincts of the Cathedral, and houses by the hundred in ruins in the city, made a heartrending spectacle.

“Up to Sunday, the 27th, we were able to remain in Malines. The enemy made two bombardments, one in the morning from 8.30 to about 11.15, and the second in the course of the afternoon.

“On receiving formal and repeated orders from the police of the town we were finally forced to leave Archbishop’s House in the evening, and returned to Antwerp where we went first to the College of St. Jean Berchmans; here an ambulance had been installed, and afterwards we went to the hospitable house of Madame la Douairière René Mortus, close to St. Joseph’s Church.

“We stayed there for twenty-two days, together with His Lordship Mgr. Legraive, our auxiliary Bishop; Canon Vrancken, our private secretary; and the family of Comte and Comtesse de Bergeyck Moretus. From there we were able to keep in touch with what patriotic and religious vitality still remained in Belgium; we suffered the hurricane of the forty-two hours’ bombardment of the commercial quarter, and on the 11th October, at eight-thirty, before the military authorities had made their entry into the city, we were enabled to converse with the Curés who had remained devotedly at their posts, and to discuss what measures were necessary in the situation.

“On the 23rd October we returned definitely to take up our residence in our episcopal city; we made it our special duty to visit without delay the families of the

refugees as they returned to their ruined homes or to the makeshift shelters they had been able to contrive; during the following weeks we went round the towns and villages of our diocese, and afterwards visited the parishes of Liège, Limbourg, Namur and Luxembourg, wherein the population had suffered most and were in urgent need of succour and consolation.

“These weeks have left their mark in my memory as among the sweetest in my career as a Bishop, in spite of their sadness, and in spite of their being like the journey to Calvary; so true is it that nothing is sweeter than being able to do good.”

The Occupying Power—for so it had been agreed to term the German authorities—vainly endeavoured to impose silence on that strong, inflexible voice which spread consolation and strength among the hearts of the people of Belgium. With the directing Government, held successively by Generals Von Bissing and Von Falkenhausen, and with Baron Von der Laencken the head of the Political Department, correspondence took place in regard to the directions given by the Cardinal, and subsequently in connection with all the many enactments of the German administration which were galling to the people and in particular to the priests. Von Bissing, who had asked the Cardinal Archbishop of Cologne to be placed in relations with the Cardinal Primate of Belgium, was very conciliatory at first, but soon lost his temper and began to threaten; Von Falkenhausen refused to discuss any question which did not directly concern religious interests; he was curt and authoritative. Von der Laencken, a diplomatist by profession, possessed a ready pen and a cold temperament; he was a casuist, and willingly discussed the force of accomplished fact and the force of right, the philosophy of Kant in opposition to that of St. Thomas, the origins of the war and the policy of England, in short, *de omni re scibili et quibusdam aliis*.

But he found himself always faced by the same sovereign serenity, the same virile and pacific heart which had enunciated to his priests the *mot d'ordre*—firmness and gentleness, and all that this implies.

“In pagan times,” remarks Paul Bourget, “the Athenians called by the name of ‘*episcopoi*’ those magistrates who were invested with the duty of seeing if everything was in order in their provinces. This is the humble and distant origin of the great Christian title “Bishop.” On those who bear this weighty charge is imposed the duty of being the maintainers of order, the overseers of all that is wanting, the directors who point it out, and the mouthpiece denouncing it. But that order over which the Bishop is the guardian is the spiritual order, the sole principal of the other, the material order in public and in private life. With what heroism did His Eminence, Cardinal Mercier, fulfil this charge during those four terrible years in which the conscience of Europe seemed to have foundered !

“Keep silent, you Theologians, in matters which do not concern you ! *Theologi, silete in munere alieno !*” These words uttered by the protestant, Gentilis, who lived at the end of the sixteenth century, brutally dismissed the Church from the domain of international law ; people no longer admitted that she had her own word to say in the name of Justice or questions connected with relationships between nations ; the Treaties of Westphalia marked the “laicizing” of politics. “It will be the imperishable glory of Cardinal Mercier,” writes Georges Goyau, “to have brought the civilised world, in a century which more than any of the preceding ones liked to proclaim itself as ‘laic’, to listen to and to acclaim the voice of morality proceeding from the lips of men of the Church, in its imperious and final condemnation of the oppression of right by violence. Thanks to him the emotions aroused in 1914 were given expression, and were alleviated and sanctioned by the

verdict of Christian thought by a verdict which based itself on higher and invincible principles ; and his heroic initiative which reintegrated the sovereign demands of morality on the question of relationships between nations was eloquent refutation of that daring and malevolent formula '*Theologi, silete !*' By the voice of Cardinal Mercier Christian sentiment declared : 'These matters *do* concern me, and when a predatory race tears up a treaty I have the right to say in the name of a just God, of God the Judge, that Justice has been violated.' And this proclamation shone forth with the suddenness of a flash of lightning through all the clouds accumulated by 'laicism,' and the vanquished of a day, whatever their view might have been the day before, were all of one mind in their joy that ecclesiastical authority did take heed of such things, and that from that lofty authority, as they read the instructions of the Cardinal, the victory of Right was beginning to hover over them under God's supreme sovereignty."

During the first three months of the occupation under the administration of Von der Goltz, there was no correspondence between the Cardinal and the Governor-General. They limited themselves to a visit of courtesy.

Soon after the Governor-General's arrival in Brussels the Cardinal went to see him, and asked for his support with the Imperial Government for his (the Cardinal's) request for the repatriation of the priests and school teachers who had been deported since the invasion. He also drew his attention to the apprehensions felt by the Belgians still remaining in the country, and by the refugees who wished to return to Belgium, that their young people might be taken to Germany with a view to be incorporated in the German army. In the course of his interview he asked Von der Goltz to ratify the undertaking given by the Governor of the province of Antwerp concerning these deportations, and to

guarantee that it would be maintained by his eventual successor.

Von der Goltz went himself next day to Malines to bring his reply. He promised to use his influence to obtain the repatriation of the deported priests and school teachers. He unhesitatingly ratified Von Huene's undertaking, and extended it to the whole of Belgium, but was careful to hold the future in reserve.

He expressed the hope of seeing the resumption of normal life.

"That is my dearest wish too," the Cardinal replied, "but the people are too much haunted by past events to regain their confidence all at once; the massacre of one hundred and forty victims at Aerschot is certainly not calculated to change that attitude." The interview terminated with an expression of a mutual wish shortly to see the reopening of the schools.

On the 3rd December, 1914, Von der Goltz was replaced in the Governor-Generalship of Belgium by Von Bissing. Hardly had he been appointed than he realised that the very heavy task which lay upon him would be rendered far easier if he could succeed in winning the Belgian clergy to his side. But he was prudent, and in order to make the achievement of his purpose more sure, he wrote to Cardinal Von Hartmann, Archbishop of Cologne, whom he knew very well, and asked him to intervene in his favour with the Primate of Belgium.

He wrote as follows: "In a large portion of Belgium the Catholic clergy represent a force the importance of which cannot be overlooked, and so I should like not to miss the opportunity of entering into relations with them and their heads, not only in the interest of my mission but also in those of the country and of the Catholic population. With a view to facilitating these relations I write to Your Eminence begging you will be good enough to acquaint the Cardinal of Malines that it

would be very agreeable to me to enter into personal relations with him, and that he will give me the opportunity of having an interview with him at Malines as soon as possible and in so far as the time at my disposal permits, or that he will be so good as to come and see me at Brussels. I hope to be able to persuade him in the course of our interview that I am determined to do all I can to give satisfaction to the Catholic Church, and on the other hand I count on his recognising the keen desire animating me, while of course safeguarding military considerations, to attach very special importance to alleviating the miseries which present circumstances have created in Belgium."

Cardinal Von Hartmann hastened to transmit his letter to Cardinal Mercier, giving it his warm support.

A few days after, on the 16th December, the Cardinal was received in Brussels by Von Bissing, and on the following day he received the latter at the Archbishop's palace.

In the course of these two interviews the Governor insisted on the sentiments he had manifested in his letter. He had it at heart to defend the spiritual interests of the Belgians, but was looking to an attitude, if not friendly, at least conciliatory, on the part of the clergy.

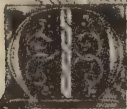
In order to show his good dispositions towards the ecclesiastical administration he accorded to the Primate all facilities for again entering into communication with his suffragan Bishops.

The Cardinal thanked Von Bissing for his benevolent intentions, but told him that whatever might be the dispositions of the Governor-General in their regard, the Belgians could never forget the horrors which had marked the beginning of the invasion.

Von Bissing protested; the conduct of the German troops, he alleged, was entirely justified by the attitude of the population.



Alse yadonne a son
Eminence le Cardinal
Mercier. Archeveque de
Malines. au clerge et aux
fidèles de son diocèse.



Mes bien-
chers freres
I ne me
semblerai
pas possible
de vous dire a quel point
votre souvenir m'est d'amen
re present durant ces
mois de souffrance et de
deuil que nous venons
de traverser. J'ai du brus-
quement vous quitter

le 11 d'octobre pour aller ren-
dre au Pape vobis et au
me que nous venions de
perdre mes derniers de-
voirs; et pour m'acquil-
ler d'une obligation de
conscience a laquelle je
ne pouvais me soustrai-
re. L'election du successeur de
Dieu le Pontife qui re-
git aujourd'hui l'Egli-
se sous le nom plein de
vobis et d'esperan-
ces de Dieu.



Homme meme
a vos coups
sur coup la des-
truction partielle
de la collegiale de



Hersleven, Bruxelles

A PAGE FROM THE FIRST PASTORAL ISSUED BY CARDINAL MERCIER
ILLUMINATED BY THE NUNS OF MAREDRET

Following these two interviews the Cardinal caused to be sent to Von Bissing, for transmission to the Archbishop of Cologne, the following letter :

“ My esteem for the person of Your Excellency, my gratitude for the concern you show for the religious interests of the country and my desire in no way to aggravate, but rather to lighten, if it be in my power, the weight of your charge and of your responsibilities, are deeply sincere. But I consider it to be the duty of frankness to add that whatever may be the personal dispositions of Monsieur le Baron Von Bissing, Monsieur le Gouverneur-Général represents in our midst a usurping and enemy nation, in the face of which we assert our right to our independence and to the respect of our neutrality. Further, in my quality of representing the moral and religious interests of Belgium I protest against the injustice and violence of which my compatriots have been the innocent victims.”

The following is the letter he wrote to Cardinal Von Hartmann which he appended to the one given above :

“ I have had the honour of seeing in Brussels, and of receiving afterwards at Malines His Excellency, Governor-General Baron von Bissing. He appeared to me such as Your Eminence depicted, and such as he depicted himself in the letter which you have been so good as to communicate to me, I mean, an upright man, prudent, and sincerely desirous of not trenching upon the religious interests of Catholic Belgium, but rather of seconding them. He had the kindness to announce to me himself the setting at liberty of our priests who had been made prisoners, and gave me grounds to hope for the approaching liberation of our lay school teachers.

“ He outlined very well, as it seems to me, the relations he deems to be feasible and desirable between the Belgians and himself. He does not expect to be welcomed as a friend, but he asks that people do not

aggravate his task and that those representing religious authority, especially, do not endeavour to do so.

“I am in agreement with Monsieur le Gouverneur-Général in this respect, and just as from the first days of the war we have enjoined on the faithful not to commit any act of hostility against the enemy army, so now we enjoin on them again to-day to respect any military regulations which do not conflict with our consciences as Christians or our dignity as patriots.

“But it should be understood, however, that if for the time being we are bending our necks beneath a power stronger than ourselves, we hold proudly in reserve our rights and our unshakable confidence in the future.

“It should be understood also that the relative benevolence of which we are to-day made the object does not absolve the crimes which the Belgians have been made to suffer so atrociously. When the Imperial Chancellor, Von Bethmann-Hollweg, dared to say in his speech of the 2nd December: ‘We shall bear in mind after the war the wrongful acts which have been committed against our fellow countrymen living defenceless in enemy countries, wrongful acts in contravention of all the laws of civilisation,’ he was guilty of brazen effrontery, and so far at least as his words were aimed at Belgium, of a monstrous lie. I myself know hundreds of victims of wrongful acts committed in contravention of all the laws of civilisation, and horrors which recall the pagan persecutions of the first three centuries of the Church; I could not give credence to them before making personal investigations, and these I carried out conscientiously; I must to-day take my stand on the evidence, and I affirm under oath that up to the present I have been unable to establish the fact of a single act of barbarity committed by a Belgian civilian on a German soldier, but I know of hundreds of cruel acts ‘committed in contravention of all the laws

of civilisation' by German soldiers upon innocent Belgians. Your Eminence will understand that patriotism and justice make it our duty to protest against these crimes until they have been punished, and I would add that if Your Eminence knew them as I do the uprightness of your conscience would compel you to join your protest to our own."

This dignified and restrained letter never reached its destination. Von Bissing refused to transmit it and returned it to the author.

In order that their salaries might continue to be paid the Belgian state officials who had remained at their posts under the German occupation were obliged to sign a declaration engaging "to take no part in anything in Belgian occupied territory." The German authorities wished to enforce the same formality on the priests. The Cardinal energetically refused to permit this, remarking that the Ministers of religion in Belgium were not state officials and that their salaries were paid to them in respect of their status. Von Bissing replied that this was not his way of looking at the matter, but that he would be contented with the declaration that the Belgian Bishops had no intention of interfering with public order, and would consider this engagement as being binding on all the Belgian clergy.

St. Paul gave to the Christian world this message of deliverance: "I suffer greatly for the Gospel, even to being bound in chains as a malefactor. But the word of God is unfettered." The following is the reply given by the Cardinal to the English journal *Everyman* on the situation of occupied Belgium:

"The suspension of the postal and railway services renders communications very difficult. I therefore felt myself compelled to limit my investigations to my own diocese, and these will be precarious and incomplete.

“Here are a few facts which will enable people to measure the extent of our disasters: nineteen parish churches in ruins or reduced to ashes, and twenty-eight grievously mutilated; schools, parish rooms, gymnastic and recreation clubs laid waste; the cities of Louvain, Aerschot, and Lierre for the greater part destroyed. Louvain has lost one thousand and eighty houses, nearly all large dwelling or business houses; other towns have been seriously affected, among which may be mentioned Malines, with three hundred and seventeen houses rendered uninhabitable, and one thousand greatly damaged; Antwerp with several hundred houses set on fire or tumbled in ruins; large villages annihilated, or bombarded to such an extent that life in them is almost extinct; roads—that from Louvain to Malines for instance—bordered with ruins for a distance of several kilometres; in a number of towns and country districts, châteaux and town houses, the dwellings of the middle class and right down to the miserable hovels of the very poor, pillaged and sacked; stables empty and land uncultivated—such is the lamentable spectacle presented by the southern portion of the province of Antwerp and the north of Brabant over an area of about two hundred and eighty square leagues which before the opening of hostilities had been rich and prosperous.

“Deprived of their means of livelihood by the closing of industrial factories, robbed of the necessities of life by the looting of the invaders and sometimes by marauders following in their footsteps, the people are suffering from hunger and cold.

“At Tremeloo, not far from Louvain, where out of two hundred and thirty homes which the village formerly numbered, only fourteen dwellings escaped destruction, we have seen with deep sorrow a family of nine children—the youngest still at the breast—weeping amid the ruins of what had formerly been their home.

"We have witnessed with horror a hundred other similar spectacles."

The Pastoral letter of the 1st January, 1915, headed "Patriotism and Endurance", was to become the fundamental charter of the rights and duties of those in the occupied regions. The Cardinal enjoined on the faithful to abstain from acts of hostility against the enemy army, and to respect the regulations in force, so long as these did not conflict with their consciences as Christians nor with their dignity as patriots. But on the other hand he solemnly affirmed that the Occupying Power was not a legitimate authority and that therefore in the secret recesses of their souls they owed it neither esteem, attachment or obedience. "The sole legitimate authority in Belgium," he added, "is that belonging to our King, to his Government, and to the representatives of the nation. He alone has a right to the affection of our hearts, and to our submission; he alone represents authority to us."

The following are a few passages:

"It would be impossible to tell you to what extent you have been present to my mind during these months of suffering and mourning through which we have just passed. I had to leave you suddenly on the 20th August to render my last duty to the venerated and beloved Pope we had just lost, and to fulfil an obligation of conscience which I could not evade in taking my part in the election of the successor to Pius X, of the Pontiff who rules to-day over the Church in the name of Benedict XV, so full of promise and hope.

"In Rome I learnt, one blow after the other, of the partial destruction of the College buildings at Louvain, of the setting on fire of the Library and scientific installations of our great University, of the devastation of the town, of the fusillades and tortures of our women,

children, and unarmed and defenceless men. And while I was still quivering over these horrors the telegraphic agencies announced the bombardment of our wonderful Metropolitan Church, of Notre Dame-au-delà-de-Dyle, of our episcopal palace, and of a considerable portion of our dear city of Malines.

“Far from my diocese and with no means of communicating with you, I was obliged to concentrate my grief within my soul, and to carry it to the foot of the Crucifix.

“This thought sustained my courage and was a light unto me: a catastrophe has fallen upon the world, I said to myself, and our dear little Belgium, so faithful to God in the mass of her population, so proud of her patriotism, so great in her King and Government, is the first victim. She bleeds, her sons are falling in their thousands in our forts and on our battlefields in order to defend her rights and the integrity of her territory; there will soon be not one family on Belgian soil which is not in mourning; why, O my God, all this sorrow? Lord, Lord, have you abandoned us?

“When on my return from Rome I went to Havre and saluted our wounded Belgians, French and English, who had already arrived there; when, a little later it was my privilege at Malines, Louvain and Antwerp to shake by the hand those brave men who bore a bullet in their bodies, or a wound on their foreheads for having marched to the assault of the enemy, or for having sustained the shock of his attacks, words of the deepest gratitude came spontaneously to my lips: ‘My valiant friends,’ I said, ‘it is for us, for each one of us, for me, that you have exposed your lives and are suffering thus. I must needs assure you of my respect and my gratitude, and tell you that the whole country is aware of what it owes you.’

“Our soldiers are our saviours in very truth.

“Once already, in Flanders, they have stopped the

march of the enemy towards Calais ; France and England know this, and before them, and before the whole world Belgium is to-day a land of heroes. Never in my whole life have I felt so proud of being a Belgian than when passing through the French railway stations, halting in Paris, and visiting London, where on every side I witnessed the enthusiastic admiration of our allies for the heroism of our army. In the estimation of everyone our King is on the topmost rung of the ladder of moral virtues ; without doubt he is the only one not to know it for he goes through the trenches like the humblest of his soldiers and encourages them with his kindly smile as he asks them never to have a doubt of their country.

“ The first duty of every Belgian citizen at the present time is gratitude to our army.

“ It is not one man, but two hundred and fifty thousand men who are fighting, suffering and falling for you in order that you may remain free, that Belgium may preserve her independence, her dynasty and her patriotic unity, that after the vicissitudes enacted on the battlefield she may rise again nobler, prouder, purer and more glorious than ever.

“ Pray daily, my brothers, for these two hundred and fifty thousand men, and for their officers who are leading them to victory, pray for our brothers in arms, pray for those who have fallen, pray for those who are still fighting, pray for the recruits who are preparing for the struggles of to-morrow.

“ In your name I send to them the greeting of our fraternal sympathy, and the assurance that we are not only praying for the success of their arms and the eternal salvation of their souls, but that we accept for their intention all the physical and moral ills afflicting us under this present oppression, and all the temporary humiliations, anguish and sorrow which the future may still hold in store for us.

“ On the day of our final victory we shall all share

in the honour ; it is just that to-day we are all in anguish.

“ Even where life is yet whole, and buildings still intact, what hidden sufferings lie concealed ! Families, which up to yesterday were living in easy circumstances, are now in want ; trade has ceased, active occupations are suspended, industry lies idle, thousands and thousands of workmen are without work ; workwomen, shop girls, domestic servants are deprived of their livelihood ; and all these poor souls return feverish to their bed of sorrows and ask ‘ when will be the end ? ’

“ My very dear brothers, that is God’s secret. He is the Master of all things that happen, and the sovereign ruler of the doings of men.

“ Ah ! proud reason, you thought to be able to do without God ! You sneered when through the mouth of Christ and His Church He pronounced grave words of expiation and penance. Drunk, frivolous man, with your ephemeral successes, sated with gold and pleasure, in your insolence you were sufficient unto yourself ! And the true God was relegated to oblivion and despised and blasphemed, sometimes with blatant boastfulness, by those whose position demanded that they should give to others an example of respect for order and its foundations. Anarchy was penetrating down to the lower order of society, and men of upright conscience felt the temptations of scandal : ‘ How long,’ they thought to themselves, ‘ Lord, how long wilt Thou tolerate this orgy of iniquity ? Where art Thou, our Master, and wilt Thou in the end justify the impious man proclaiming aloud that Thou carest nought for the work of Thy hands ? ’

“ A thunderbolt falls and all human calculations are overturned. The whole of Europe is trembling over a volcano.

“ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

“ Emotions crowd thick upon men’s souls, but there is one which is dominating all others, and that is the

feeling that God is revealing Himself as the Master of us all.

“God will save Belgium, my brothers; you can have no doubt of this.

“Let us say rather: ‘He is saving her.’

“In very truth, through the glare of flames and the vapour of blood, do you not already catch a glimpse of the evidences of His love?

“Is there a patriot who does not feel that Belgium has grown greater?

“Who among us would dare to tear up the latest page of our history?

“Who is there that does not contemplate with pride the gleaming rays of glory from our stricken land?

“While in her grief she is giving birth to heroism she is pouring energy into the blood of her sons.

“We have need, let us frankly confess, of a lesson in patriotism.

“Belgians in great numbers were using up their strength and wasting their time in fruitless strife of class, race, and personal passions.

“But on the 2nd August, when a foreign power, trusting in its might, and unmindful of the binding force of Treaties, dared to threaten our independence, every Belgian without distinction of party, condition, or origin, rose up like one man, massing round their King and Government to tell the invaders: ‘Thou shalt not pass!’

“All in a moment we became resolutely conscious of our patriotism; this signified that in each one of us there was a sentiment deeper than personal interest, ties of blood and the urge of party—the need, and consequently the will to devote oneself to the common cause, to what Rome called the ‘*Res publica*,’ and this sentiment is patriotism.

“One’s country is not merely an agglomeration of individuals or families living on the same soil, holding

with each other more or less close relationships as neighbours or in business affairs, and recalling the same memories, whether happy or painful; no, it is an association of souls in the service of a social organisation which must be safeguarded and defended at all cost, even at the price of one's life blood, under the leadership of the man or men who preside over its destinies.

"And it is because, fellow-countrymen, they possess one common soul through their traditions, live the same life handed down from the past, and through their common aspirations and common hopes live the same life prolonged into the future.

"Patriotism, the inner principle of unity and order, the organic link uniting the members of the same country, was regarded by the leading thinkers of ancient Greece and Rome as the highest in the order of natural virtues. Aristotle, the prince of pagan philosophers, deemed disinterestedness in the service of the city, that is of the State, to be the highest ideal attainable on this earth.

"The religion of Christ made patriotism a law: there can be no perfect Christian who is not a perfect patriot.

"It raises and defines the ideal of pagan reason by showing that it can only be realised in the Absolute.

"Now whence arises this universal, irresistible impulse which all at once seizes upon every will in a nation, causing them to unite as one man in resisting the enemy forces threatening their unity and independence?

"How explain that when the moment arrives every private interest gives way to the general interest, and every life offers itself to be sacrificed?

"It is true that the State is essentially of greater account than the individual and the family when the welfare of the family and the individual is the *raison d'être* of its organisation.

"It is *not* true that the country is a Moloch on whose altar every life may be legitimately sacrificed.

“The brutality of pagan manners and the despotism of the Caesars had led to the aberration—and modern militarism was tending to revive it—that the State is omnipotent, and that its discretionary power creates Right.

“Not so, answers Christian theology; Right is a state of Peace, that is, the interior order of the nation founded upon Justice. Now Justice is only absolute in so far as it is the expression of the essential relationship of men with God and with each other.

“And thus war for war’s sake is a crime. War is only justifiable as a necessary means to ensure peace.

“‘Peace should not serve as a preparation for war,’ said St. Augustine, ‘War should only be waged in order to obtain peace.’

“We can say without being guilty of pride, my brothers, that our little Belgium has won the first rank in the esteem of nations.

“I know well there were clever people, especially in Italy and Holland, who said: ‘Why expose Belgium to this huge loss in money and men? Would it not be enough if she protested verbally against the enemy aggression, or, if need be, that she fire a cannon shot on her frontier?’

“But all true-hearted men will be on our side against men who suggested these mean calculations.

“Utilitarianism is not the norm of Christian citizenship either for individuals or nations.

“Article 7 of the Treaty signed in London on the 19th April, 1839, in the name of Belgium on one side, and in that of the Emperor of Austria, the King of France, the Queen of England, the King of Prussia, and the Emperor of Russia, on the other, declared that ‘Belgium shall form an Independent and permanently neutral State, and shall be held to the observation of this neutrality towards all the other States.’

“On their side the co-signatories of the Treaty, promised for themselves and their successors on oath to carry out and observe the said Treaty in all its points and articles without contravention and without permitting it to be contravened.

“Belgium was bound on her honour to defend her independence : she has kept her word.

“The other powers had bound themselves to respect and protect Belgian neutrality : Germany has violated her oath, England remained faithful to it.

“These are the facts.

“Let us deserve our liberation. Let us hasten it on by our virtue, still more by the prayers coming from our lips.

“Courage, my brothers ! Our sufferings will pass ; the crown of life for our souls, and glory for our nation will not pass.

“I do not ask you in any shape or form—take note of this—to renounce any of your patriotic aspirations.

“On the contrary I consider it to be an obligation of my pastoral charge to define your duties of conscience in face of the Power that has invaded our soil and has, for the time being, occupied the greater portion of it.

“This Power is not a legitimate Authority. And consequently in the inner recesses of your soul you owe to it neither esteem, attachment, or obedience.

“The sole legitimate Power in Belgium is that belonging to our King, to his Government, and to the representatives of the nation. He alone represents authority to us. He alone has a right to the affection of our hearts, and to our submission.

“Of themselves the acts of public administration of the Occupying Power would be without binding force, but legitimate authority ratifies tacitly those which are justified by the general interests, and from such ratification alone proceeds any juridical value they may have.

“Occupied provinces are not conquered provinces : Belgium is not a German province, any more than Galicia is a Russian one.

“Nevertheless, the occupied portion of the country is in a situation of fact to which it must loyally submit. The majority of our towns have been surrendered to the enemy, and are bound to respect the conditions of surrender to which they have subscribed.

“From the commencement of military operations the civil authorities of the country have insistently enjoined on private citizens to abstain from acts of hostility against the enemy army. These injunctions remain in force.

“Our army alone, in conjunction with the brave combatants of our allies, has the honour and the task of our national defence. Let us learn how to await from it our final deliverance.

“Towards those who dominate our country by military force and who, at the back of their consciences, cannot but admire the chivalrous energy with which we have defended and are still defending our independence, let us have such consideration as the public interest demands. There are several of them who protest that, in so far as they can, they are willing to mitigate our trials and aid us to resume in some small degree our ordinary public life. Let us respect the regulations they have laid down so long as they do not conflict with our consciences as Christians nor our dignity as patriots. Let not our courage consist in bravado, nor our bravery in unruliness.

“Our misfortunes have deeply moved other nations.

“Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XV, with touching benevolence was the first to turn his paternal heart towards us.

“When he deigned to receive me in his arms, a few moments after his election, I had the confidence to ask him that his very first Pontifical benediction should be

for Belgium, even then so sorely tried by the war. He acceded with earnest readiness to my wish, which I knew to be your own also.

“And now with exquisite delicacy he has renounced of his own accord your annual contribution to Peter’s Pence. In a document dated on the beautiful Feast of Mary Immaculate, he deigns to tell us how keenly he shares in our woes; he prays for us, begs for protection from on High for the Belgian nation, and in the approaching festival of the Prince of Peace invites you to salute the dawn of better days.

“The following is the text of this precious document :

“ ‘TO OUR DEAR SON,

“ ‘GREETING AND THE APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION.

“ ‘The paternal solicitude We bear to all the faithful whom Divine Providence has committed to Our charge causes us to share in their griefs even more than in their joys.

“ ‘Could We therefore fail to experience very keen sorrow on beholding the Belgian nation, so greatly loved by Us, reduced to a truly lamentable condition by a most cruel and disastrous war?

“ ‘We see the King of the Belgians and his august family, the members of the Government, the highly-placed personages of the nation, the Bishops, the priests and the entire people enduring ills which fill with pity every upright heart, and which Our soul, burning with paternal love, is the first to feel. Wherefore, beneath the load of this sorrow and this mourning, with all Our desire we call for an end to so great misfortunes. May the God of Pity hasten that moment! Meanwhile We are straining, in so far as lies in Us, to mitigate so many poignant sorrows. Under this head the steps taken by Our Dear Son, Cardinal von Hartmann, Archbishop of Cologne, with a view to secure that the French and Belgian priests, kept as prisoners in Germany, should

be treated as officers, was very pleasing to Us, and We have been pleased to give public testimony to him of Our gratitude.

“ ‘As regards Belgium it has recently been reported to Us that the faithful of that sorely-tried nation were not, in their piety, omitting to turn their eyes and their thoughts towards Us; while themselves under the blow of so many calamities they are still proposing, this year, as in preceding years, to collect the offering of Peter’s Pence in aid of the needs of the Holy Apostolic See. This truly incomparable testimony of piety and attachment fills Us with admiration; We accept it with all the benevolence it merits and with a grateful heart; but, taking into consideration the truly pitiable condition in which Our dear sons are situated, We are quite unable to bring Ourselves to encourage the realisation of this project, however noble it be. If any little money be collected Our will is that it be destined to the succour of the Belgian people, as illustrious by their nobility and their piety as they are deserving of compassion at this time.

“ ‘In the midst of the difficulties and anguish of the present time We have invited Our sons who are dear to us to remember that the “arm of the Lord is not shortened, and He is able to save; His ear is not deaf, but is always open to our prayer.”

“ ‘And may this hope of divine succour increase with the approach of the Festivities of Christmas whose Mystery celebrates the birth of Our Lord, and reminds us of that peace which God announced to men by His angels.

“ ‘May sorrowing and afflicted souls also find comfort and consolation in the assurance of the paternal tenderness which inspires Our prayer; may God have pity on the Belgian nation; may He heap the abundance of His benefits upon her.

“ ‘In pledge of our earnest wishes We accord to all

and each, and first of all to you, Our Dear Son, the Apostolic Benediction.

“ ‘ Given at Rome, at St. Peter’s, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, in the year MCMXIV, the first of Our Pontificate.

“ ‘ BENEDICT XV, Pope.’ ”

Copies of the Letter issued from the printing press of Monsieur Dessain, printer to the Archbishop’s Palace, were taken to the different Deaneries in the diocese by the seminarists on leaving Malines for the Christmas vacation. A note appended to the Pastoral enjoined on priests to read it to the faithful from beginning to end “ without any omission or excisions, no matter what authority might intervene to give orders to the contrary.”

On Friday, the 1st January, the Curé in many churches read the first part of the Letter.

These comforting words produced an enormous effect. Whereupon the German Authority intervened without delay. At 6.15 a.m., on the 2nd January three emissaries from the Governor General presented themselves at the Archbishop’s Palace and demanded speech with His Eminence.

He was in the chapel, ready to celebrate Mass. He repaired to the parlour where his visitors were awaiting him.

One of them acted as spokesman : “ Eminence, we come on the part of His Excellency, the Governor General, to inform you of his surprise on reading the Pastoral Letter you have sent to the clergy and the faithful. His Excellency thought he could expect, if not a sympathetic understanding on the part of Your Eminence, at least your support in calming the population. Your Eminence had allowed him to believe that such were your intentions.”

The Cardinal replied: "You tell me that His Excellency is surprised? Surprised at what?"

"At certain passages wherein Your Eminence excites the animosity of the population against Germany."

"Gentlemen," replied the Cardinal, "you are much mistaken. If you have read my Letter you must recognise that it is of a nature to pacify. But you cannot be unaware that our people have suffered enormously; and when our faithful and our clergy suffer, I suffer as much as they, and it is my duty to tell them so."

"But there are sentences which tend to excite them."

"Have you read the Letter?"

"Yes; you say that people owe to authority neither submission nor attachment."

"Pardon me: on the contrary I say that people owe attachment and submission to legitimate authority. But I say that the Occupying Power is not the legitimate authority: to that Power people owe respect and abstention from every act of hostility. And I did not even wait for you to move before enjoining on the faithful to abstain from every act of hostility; in the month of August I gave instructions in this sense and enjoined respect for the military Authority."

"Nevertheless in this Letter are there not incitements against the German Authority?"

"The Letter must be taken as a whole and not be cut up into pieces; as a whole the Letter preaches patience and submission under the sufferings of the present hour."

"The Governor desires to have an explanation."

"I will explain to the Governor General. Besides, I have already written to him. I had feared that the visits of courtesy that had passed between us might give rise to a misapprehension; I therefore wrote to him: 'Monsieur, le Gouverneur Général, I have for your person a sincere deference. But it should be understood that this regard does not entail on my part the sub-

mission of my mind to an enemy nation which has invaded our territory.' ”

“ But why,” broke in an officer who had hitherto remained silent, “ remind the faithful in your Letter of previous events that had already taken place ? ”

“ Because the situation to-day is in great part the result of the atrocities our people have endured. When I preach to them patience and resignation I cannot pretend to ignore the interdependence of events.”

“ Your Eminence will give your explanation to Monsieur le Gouverneur Général.”

“ When ? ”

“ We will inform Your Eminence on our return to Brussels.”

“ Very well. But I must tell you that I am not free to-morrow.”

“ Your Eminence will have to hold yourself at the disposition of His Excellency, the Governor-General, on the day and hour he may appoint.”

“ Gentlemen, I must again repeat that I am not free to-morrow; I have to preside at a religious ceremony at Antwerp.”

“ Has Your Eminence already sent out your Letter ? ”

“ My Pastoral ? All the Curés have received it.”

“ Your Eminence has therefore infringed the regulation forbidding anything to be published without first passing the German censorship.”

“ I was unaware of that regulation.”

“ But it has been posted up everywhere.”

“ I am not in the habit of reading the notices. You might very easily have sent me a copy.”

“ Has the Letter been read publicly ? ”

“ It was read yesterday, the 1st January, in several places. In any case, it will be read everywhere to-morrow.”

“ Then we are too late ! ” exclaimed the spokesman of the deputation with an air of despair.

The visitors took their leave to make their report to their chief, apologising for having presented themselves at such an early hour, and begging His Eminence to hold himself at the disposition of the Governor.

That same evening the following telegram arrived at the Archbishop's Palace : " The Governor General begs His Eminence to be so good as to give up the journey to Antwerp he was contemplating for to-morrow."

During the evening of Saturday, January 2nd, and during the ensuing night, messengers sent by the German Government went to the majority of the Curés and forbade them to continue the public reading of the Letter. In very many cases they took possession of the text of the Pastoral Letter by force or by threats; all copies of the Letter still remaining at the printers were confiscated.

Towards the close of Sunday, 3rd January, a German officer, accompanied by an orderly, came to make enquiries among the establishment at the Palace as to whether His Eminence had left Malines on that day. He was not content with the word of the concierge, but insisted on having a statement from His Eminence's secretary, or from someone in his immediate *entourage*. Brother Egide, the house steward, presented himself before the officer and reiterated the assurance that His Eminence had not gone outside the town. The officer and his orderly then retired.

Next morning Captain Von Strempele presented himself at the Palace and handed in the following letter from the Governor General, with the request for an immediate reply.

" I have had the honour to receive Your Eminence's letter of the 28th December. I take note that Your Eminence appreciates the spirit which animates me in the exercise of my duties towards the Belgian population and especially in those connected with the spiritual and moral interests represented by Your Eminence. I

appreciate on my part the sentiments manifested by Your Eminence towards my person. But I was painfully surprised by the ending of your letter and by that written by Your Eminence to Cardinal Von Hartmann. I notice that Your Eminence even to-day still adopts towards the German Government a view incompatible with the efforts you are making to co-operate in healing the wounds from which your country is suffering. I had already remarked to Your Eminence in the course of our interview that events provoked by the necessities of war and by the conduct of the Belgian population could not be made the subject of an exchange of views between us. To my great regret Your Eminence has seized the opportunity in his letter to me, and also in that addressed to Cardinal Von Hartmann, to return to these happenings. I would draw the attention of Your Eminence to the fact that the German Government has innumerable proofs at its disposal which justify completely the methods employed by the German troops towards the Belgian civil population who have acted contrary to all recognised rights. I must therefore protest in the most energetic manner when Your Eminence accuses the responsible political authorities in Germany of falsehood, and by wounding expressions attacks the honour of our army which has acted under conditions of legitimate self-defence. Your Eminence will recognise, with me, that so long as you think you have the right to give expression to such sentiments and such ideas, I must find it impossible to grant to you the facilities you request for moving freely about; for I do not now find any common ground on which I can confidently rely for working in harmony with you for the interests of the Belgian population.

“Just as I was despatching my letter to Your Eminence, the Pastoral Letter addressed by you to your diocesans was communicated to me; my surprise was deplorable. I must excuse myself from entering into

details on its contents, for it is not yet possible to gauge the significance of the document drawn up by Your Eminence; neither do I feel myself authorised on my sole initiative to take the necessary measures to repair the harm caused by this Letter and to protect the rights and dignity of the German Government.

"It is plainly visible that the reading of the Letter has already provoked unrest among the Belgian population; if still graver facts result from it Your Eminence will have to bear the sole responsibility. I am obliged to request Your Eminence immediately to forbid all your clergy to read and disseminate your Pastoral."

On opening the letter the Cardinal saw at once that it was written in German characters which he found it almost impossible to read. He therefore requested Captain Von Strempel to transcribe it into Roman characters; this he undertook to do and spent part of the morning in re-writing it in Roman characters; he then handed him the copy, saying: "Will His Eminence be pleased to give his reply as soon as possible; the Governor-General is waiting."

"That is all very well," replied the Cardinal, "but the Governor took his time to give me his impressions on my Pastoral; it is only fair that I should take mine to give him the reply that they call for. I beg you will return in the evening."

"Impossible," answered the Captain, "I have my orders not to leave the Palace without having the reply in my possession."

The Cardinal vainly insisted on his being allowed the liberty to prepare the reply at his leisure; his invariable answer was: "I am in no hurry; I will wait." When it appeared that the Captain would not stir an inch from the Cardinal the latter said: "Well, make use of the time at your disposal; I give you my word of honour that I will not go away. Do you take me for a bandit?"

The Governor-General repeated his orders by telephone : Von Strempel was to wait for the Cardinal's reply at Malines.

Opinions were divided among the Cardinal's *entourage*. Some would have liked him to soften down the expressions in his Pastoral. Had he really a right to expose the priests to all the perils of a violent repression? Would it not be more in the general interest to give proofs of a conciliatory spirit? Could His Eminence rashly expose his person to the possibility of imprisonment, exile, or even a worse punishment? Would not the separation of the Pastor from his flock abandon the diocese and the country to extremely grave perils?

It was a critical moment.

After taking counsel with his immediate *entourage* the Cardinal retired to his private Chapel to pray; he then wrote the letter, the essential passages of which I give below, in which he stated that his action had been the result of mature reflection and that he was unable either to disavow or withdraw it.

"I appreciate the concern of Your Excellency to avoid further conflict with our country, already so sorely tried, and no one shares this earnest wish more keenly than myself.

"But all the more important is it, if we desire to render this co-operation between us a durable one, that it should not rest on any misunderstanding. In accordance with my desire for frankness I was careful to make a distinction between our personal relations, those of mutual courtesy and goodwill such as I have the honour to hold with Monsieur le Baron Von Bissing, and my relations entailed by my position in regard to the representative of a nation we are grieved to have as our enemy. I had flattered myself with the hope that my clearness of language would have been appreciated, and I certainly did not expect that it would have caused the

withdrawal of the permission to move about freely which Your Excellency had been graciously pleased to accord to me. But I bow to your decision. Furthermore, I have not yet, up to the present, passed beyond the limits of my diocese; I will not do so.

“The second portion of Your Excellency’s despatch concerns my Pastoral Letter. In the first place I thank Your Excellency for having renounced your intention of punishing those priests who have read from the pulpit the Letter they were required to read. They obeyed their Bishop. On him alone rests responsibility for the orders he had given to his clergy.

“You seem to be apprehensive, Monsieur le Gouverneur-Général, that the reading of my Pastoral Letter may be provocative of unrest, and you point out the distressing consequences which popular feeling might entail.

“Allow me to tell you that you are little acquainted with my faithful diocesans. If I had concealed from them anything that was in my mind, or if I had endeavoured to win their endurance by force, they might perhaps have stiffened themselves against my injunctions.

“But I spoke to them the language of a father who has confidence in his sons. I told them that I understood their woes, and because I understood them I was able to suffer with them; I laid before them, in its integrity, the doctrine of the Gospels on their relations with the Power which for the time being is in occupation of a portion of our provinces; ‘whatever may be the sentiments vibrating in the inner recesses of your souls,’ I told them, ‘you should, in your external acts, respect the regulations of the Occupying Power, so long as these do not conflict with your consciences as Christians and your dignity as patriots. In your outer demeanour you should conform to the afore-mentioned regulations, and it is the legitimate authority—that of

your Government—which by its tacit approval and in the interests of general order, obliges you to respect them.’

“As a Belgian I know my brethren; as a Pastor I know my sons, and I give my guarantee to you, Monsieur le Gouverneur-Général, that if you will be so good as to forbid in your subordinates all high-handed conduct such as that which took place in a considerable number of peaceful communes during the night of the 2/3 January, I guarantee, on my word, that the public peace will not be troubled.”

People of foreign countries heard the echo of the publication of the Pastoral Letter. Mr. Schreiner, the correspondent of the Associated Press of America, sent to the Cardinal, through the intermediary of the German authorities, a telegram asking for particulars of the manner in which the German authorities had behaved to him over this matter.

The following is the text of his reply:

“In reply to your telegram I regret to state that the homes of numerous priests were forcibly entered accompanied by threats of fine or imprisonment; many were arrested. The printer of the Pastoral Letter was fined five hundred marks. I myself, at six o'clock in the morning of the 2nd January, received three officers, who ordered me to remain at the disposition of the Governor-General; on Sunday, the 3rd January, I was forbidden by telegram from the Governor-General to proceed to Antwerp to preside at a religious ceremony.

“I should be obliged by acknowledgment of receipt of my telegram.”

The Governor-General refused to transmit this telegram. He invited the Cardinal to soften down the text of his reply to the correspondent of the Associated Press. To this he gave an energetic refusal, declaring that what he had stated was nothing but the truth.

At the end of 1914, and at the beginning of 1915, the

German Government appointed commissions of investigation in Belgium, composed entirely of Imperial officials. Their conclusions, which had been drawn up in advance, proclaimed that the German army was innocent of the crimes of which their enemies were accusing them; if severe repressive measures had had on occasion to be applied these must be imputed solely to the brutal and savage conduct of the Belgian civilian population. This was an old story which may be found with variations on every page of the White Book, which will remain for future generations one of the most convincing compilations of documentary evidence of the duplicity, arrogance, and also unconsciousness of Prussian militarism.

Witnesses summoned to testify before a one-sided commission will, as a rule, be afraid to tell the truth. The truth will not become fully known, and will only be universally accepted on the condition that a mixed commission be formed to collect it, and guarantee its impartiality and correctness.

"And so I can only repeat again," wrote the Cardinal, "my proposition to entrust to a mixed commission, composed partly of German, and partly of Belgian magistrates, the task of throwing full light on the facts concerning which the Governor-General is happily inspired to institute an investigation. In order to give the full authority to the results of this investigation which is desirable, it is important that the tribunal should be presided over by a delegate from a neutral state." It was of the essence of prudence not to offer any really efficacious assistance except on the condition that the commission of enquiry should afford every guarantee of impartiality. Is it necessary to add that nothing was done to follow up this proposition?

Von Bissing returned to the charge. Without trying to throw any light on the horrors which had marked the entry of the Germans into Belgium—which would have

turned to their confusion—he would have liked to limit his enquiry to one sole point : the assaults committed on nuns by the German soldiers. The Cardinal, while leaving it to be understood that accusations of this kind were not so destitute of foundation as the Governor-General seemed to believe, declared that he was unable to take part in an enquiry relating to such delicate matters; Von Bissing made this refusal a pretext to refuse to take part in the enquiry into the conduct of the German troops; once again he had travestied the thought that was in the mind of the Cardinal when he wrote.

On the 14th April, 1915, Mgr. Mittendorf, the Catholic Chaplain-in-Chief of the German armies in the West, was brought into the presence of the Cardinal; he drew a letter from his pocket and read it aloud to him, without letting go of it, or allowing him to cast his eyes over the document.

“The newspapers have published a letter from Your Eminence to Cardinal Amette,” he said. “Now, there is a regulation forbidding any Belgian to correspond with any person whomsoever without first submitting his correspondence to the German censorship.

“If a citizen had committed the infraction of which Your Eminence has just been guilty, we should have to punish him. But from a love of peace, and respect for the Holy See, and for the purple worn by Your Eminence, we are unwilling to inflict punishment on you. We should prefer, if Your Eminence should compel us to do so, to defer the case to the Holy See.”

The Cardinal made no difficulty in acknowledging that he had written to the Archbishop of Paris.

“But I am aware that you are a priest, and as such, are in a position to enlighten your Government on Catholic life. Now, could anyone with any knowledge of the requirements necessary for the administration of a Catholic diocese, imagine that I could remain for whole

months without corresponding with Rome? I have written several times to the Holy See, to the Roman Congregations, to colleagues in the Sacred College belonging to Italy, England, the United States, and elsewhere; the obligations of my charge make it my duty to declare to you that I could not prevent myself from still corresponding in the future with people abroad. It is useless for you to try and find out the means by which I am able to correspond. Have we not friends from the United States, from Italy and Holland coming to see us every day with offers of their good offices? Do not the Legations of the United States and of Spain, and the Nunciature correspond freely with the outside world? Note well that I am not indicating any of these channels as my means of intercourse, but I wish to point out to you that in order to maintain relations with outside, when I am obliged to do so, useful means are never wanting to me."

"Could not Your Eminence have submitted to the censorship your letter to Cardinal Amette?"

"That letter was an expression of my thanks to the French Bishops for the sympathy they were kind enough to offer me on the occasion of the publication of my Christmas Pastoral. I waited two months before showing them my gratitude—surely sufficient proof that I was not wishing to engender any disturbance. It was indeed incumbent upon me to reply, if I would avoid being considered as impolite. Now, supposing, Monseigneur, that I had submitted to the Governor-General a letter of thanks written to those who publicly placed themselves on my side at the time of the contest that arose between him and myself, what would His Excellency have said, what could he say? That I was making a mock of him, is it not so? Very well, I had no wish to make a mock of His Excellency. Herein lay my fault, if fault it be." Mgr. Mittendorf was obliged to accept the following conclusion uttered by the Cardinal.

It is not certain, moreover, that beneath the simple and natural tone in which it was offered, he grasped and understood the lesson it conveyed. "You Germans, after several months of occupation, have not yet come to understand the Belgians. With you, a General gives an order and every neck bows down mechanically in obedience. With us, good sense and a regard for higher interests interpret the orders given and dictate our attitude. Regulations for external order are doubtless for everybody to observe, and in that sense I have recognised them myself, as the Governor-General recalls in his letter. But everybody applies them by respecting different situations and the obligations these entail."

Stories abound relating to the time of the war. I will confine myself to giving three which reveal the strenuous courage of the Cardinal.

The final bombardment of Malines by the German army began on Sunday, the 27th September, 1914, at an early hour. The Archbishop's Palace was made a special mark, and the domestics were in terror. The Cardinal remained very calm in his working study. At eleven o'clock in the morning his private secretary, at that time Canon Vrancken, came to join him and place himself at his disposal. His Eminence told him "that he did not intend to leave Malines; when the flock was in danger it was no time to abandon them."

At mid-day, the Cardinal had a meal brought for him and his secretary to a room contiguous to his reading study. The servant in attendance was seized with such fright at the noise of the shells bursting in the street that his trembling hands were endangering the safety of the plates and dishes together with their contents. It was a tragic, and at the same time a comic spectacle, and the Cardinal, always perfectly calm, could not help smiling several times while he did his best to put heart into his terrified servant.

In the afternoon the bombardment redoubled in

violence. Shells struck the Palace, and made large holes in it. The servants, some three in all, had taken refuge in the cellars, into which the Cardinal and his secretary finally followed them.

At seven-thirty p.m. Canon Vrancken went to the Town Hall to get news. The Burgomaster told him that the Germans were approaching and doubtless would not be long before they entered the town. He had received orders from the Belgian authorities that all the inhabitants were to evacuate the place. He begged the Cardinal to give an example of obedience and to get away as soon as possible.

When the Cardinal heard the situation he recognised that all that now remained to him to do was to give proof of his deference towards the authorities by leaving the town.

At the opening of hostilities he had spontaneously given his motor car to the Belgian army. But later on, at the urgent entreaty of M. de Broqueville, he agreed to have an army car placed at his disposal. In this car the Cardinal, accompanied by Canon Vrancken, left Malines during the evening of September 27th for Antwerp. During the journey he picked up three wounded soldiers, one of them so severely wounded that the car arrived at its destination covered with blood.

We will now reproduce an episode published by Dr. Heineman in an article in the *Berliner Tageblatt*. The article characterises the Cardinal as an irreconcilable enemy of Germany, but at the same time as worthy of the deepest respect and the highest esteem. And this apparent contradiction is explained on reading between the lines that the writer of the article only narrates what he himself lived through :

“ This Prelate, an enemy of Germany, felt no personal hatred for the Germans. On the 16th March, 1916, it happened that a very youthful German Lieutenant was standing in admiration before the beautiful canvas by

Rubens which adorns the altar in the Cathedral of Malines. Two priests were crossing the Cathedral at this moment, and as they passed close to the young Lieutenant, the elder of the two, who was none other than Cardinal Mercier, asked his companion in Latin how old he thought this very young Lieutenant might be. The latter, who had overheard the remark, turned round and said: 'Diem natalem vicesiman hodie Mechliniis habeo.' The Prelate smiled, wished the young Lieutenant health and long life, and invited him to come and share his meal. He enquired after his family, and his studies, taking no notice of the untidy appearance of the young man—the accompaniment of war. The Cardinal also asked him his impressions of the hard life in the trenches, whereat the young man replied: 'Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat,' whereat the tears glistened in the eyes of the old man.

"When the young man left to go back to his post the Cardinal gave him his blessing, although he belonged to another religion, saying: 'It is not the Cardinal who blesses you, but an old man who has always tried to do his duty and gives his blessing to a young man going forth to do likewise: Go forth under God's protection, and may He guard you.'

"When the young Lieutenant was preparing to enter the train which was to take him to the front, an Abbé approached him and put into his hands a packet from the Cardinal containing fruit, sweetmeats and a book, 'Carmina Horatii.' On a marked page he had underlined four lines on the virtues which open the gates of Olympus to the hero and bear him away on their wings far above the din of the world and the miseries of earth:

*Virtus, recludens immeritis mōri
Caelum, negata tentat iter via
Coetusque vulgares et udam
Spernit humum fugiente penna."*

“Hostilities have now come to an end. As everyone knows, Baron von der Laencken, the skilful diplomatist who directed the political department of the German administration in Belgium during the war, was often sent on a mission to the Cardinal. Every time he received him the Cardinal remained standing, holding his head high, and separating himself from his visitor by the whole width of the small waiting room, no matter how long the interview lasted. This attitude dispensed him from the interchange of any courtesies by keeping him severely at a distance. When the Armistice had been concluded Von der Laencken paid him a last visit in order to beg his intervention with the Belgian population on behalf of the German troops who were beating a retreat. This time the Cardinal gave him his hand and begged him to take a seat. As this change in his reception did not escape his visitor's notice the Cardinal explained to him: ‘Yesterday you were the enemy in occupation, before whom it was not for me to bow. To-day you are the enemy conquered; you are covered by the laws of hospitality.’

Von der Laencken went back to Brussels deeply moved by the reception that had been accorded to him, and before quitting Belgium whence our armies were pursuing the Germans, he wrote to the Cardinal: “You are to us the incarnation of Occupied Belgium, and are her venerated Pastor to whom she hearkens.”

CHAPTER II

PATIENCE UNDER TRIALS

The Pastoral Letter "A Call to Prayer," and its consequences. Further protests by Von Bissing, and the Cardinal's firm defence. Baron Von der Laencken and the Cardinal. The Pastoral "On our Return from Rome," and attacks by the German Press. Further trouble with Von Bissing, and the Cardinal's letter to him. The heavy hand of Germany on the Belgian population. Letters between the Cardinal and Von der Laencken. German action as regards the Belgian Schools. The Cardinal again taken to task by Von Bissing over the Pastoral, "The Voice of God." The Cardinal's defence of it to Von der Laencken. The deportations to Germany. The Pastoral, "Courage, mes Frères." Death of Von Bissing, 18th April, 1917, and appointment of Baron Von Falkenhausen to succeed him. German decree to divide Belgium into two centres of administration, and Belgian opposition; the Cardinal's protest. German requisitions. The end of the Occupation. German appreciation of the Cardinal expressed in an official letter.

On Sunday, September 26th, 1915, all the faithful in the diocese listened to a fresh Pastoral Letter headed "A Call to Prayer." In it the Cardinal again poured forth encouragement and counsel. "Our trials are lengthening out; do not give way to weariness, I beg of you; let us not cease praying and doing good; the sower must wait for the harvest; it will come in due time

and will not evade you." After pointing out that the struggle between good and evil dates from the beginning of the world, and that the drama of Lucifer and the Holy Angels is ceaselessly being renewed through the centuries, he recommended his clergy to profit by the Feast of St. Michael and the first days of the month of the Holy Rosary to redouble the ardour of their supplications in order to hasten the deliverance of the Belgian fatherland. He requested them from now onwards to recite attentively the prayer which is said after Mass : "And do thou, Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God thrust down Satan to Hell, and all other wicked spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls."

The Germans recognised themselves under the description of "Satan and all other wicked spirits," and so we can imagine what a torrent of abuse and threats they let loose against the Cardinal. In spite, however, of all the excitement the Governor-General gave no signs of life. It was not until the 7th October that Baron Von der Laencken requested an appointment with the Cardinal.

He came next day, three-quarters-of-an-hour late, alleging in excuse a mishap to his car.

The interview lasted about two hours. The following is an account of it, summarised from notes taken down by the Cardinal himself immediately after the Baron's departure :

He began by reading out aloud four or five large sheets of paper, after telling the Cardinal that the document he was about to read had been drawn up by himself at the request of His Excellency, Von Bissing, who had subsequently approved it.

When he had finished reading the Cardinal asked if he might take possession of the document.

The reply was in the negative : "No, my instructions are not to part with my manuscript."

“In that case it will be impossible for me to reply as adequately as I could wish to each of the complaints formulated in the Governor-General’s despatch.”

“Oh! My mission is not to discuss it, but to communicate the views of His Excellency to Your Eminence.”

“But still I must have the opportunity of estimating what his views are, for I presume the Governor-General desires to know, yes or no, whether I agree with his way of looking at the matter.”

The Cardinal summed up the four complaints and entered upon his refutation of them.

“You say that my Letter is seditious, that it excites the people against the Occupying Power, and that here and there you already notice indications of popular unrest. Well, this is the third time you have used similar language to me. Has not experience opened your eyes? In spite of all your pessimistic prognostications, has not the country remained calm? Is there a single Belgian who, during the year you have been trampling on our soil under conditions you well know—is there a single Belgian, I repeat, who has touched the hair of a single German’s head? Has anyone fired a single shot at your men?”

“No, because we take good care of that and keep a close watch over them.”

“That is not so, Monsieur; it is not because you take good care of that, and keep a close watch over them. You will be good enough to recognise, will you not, that if political passions had been aroused against you, as you say, a shot from a revolver might very easily have been fired upon your men from behind a wall, or from some second storey. And out of these thousands of men who are risking their lives to rejoin our army, many could be found to do you a bad turn under cover of darkness. It is you, on the contrary, who have done everything you can to provoke a popular rising, and the



Photopress

CARDINAL MERCIER LANDING IN NEW YORK

persistent calmness of our people is disconcerting to you."

"It is we ourselves then who have committed provocation? We are the instigators?"

"Yes, Sir, you *are* the instigators, and I will now proceed to prove it to you.

"What did you do on the occasion of the publication of my first Pastoral Letter? You hustled off your soldiers on bicycles, motor-cycles and motor-cars, in the evening and throughout the night, to all our peaceful villages in the Campine and Wallonia; you startled out of their sleep the clergy, sacristans, and the servants of the Presbyteries; you burst open, with threats and sometimes with revolver in hand, the churches, sacristies and the drawers containing the vestments of the priests, in the hope of laying hands on my Pastoral; this lasted for several days; while the Governor-General in his letter of the 3rd January was foreboding, as you are doing to-day, a revolt among the people, the people remained calm and docile under the counsels of endurance we were preaching to them. Then, as now, the Belgian people remained submissive, not because of you, but *in spite of* you.

"Do you remember how you treated me when I went to Brussels on the occasion of a Mass at Sainte Gudule?"

"I can still see before my eyes that boorish official who stopped me at the gates of the city, on the bridge over the canal, and in an insulting manner demanded my *carte d'identité*."

"Oh! All our soldiers were not brought up in a drawing-room!"

"No; neither were ours; and so it is not on this instance of intentional discourtesy that I intend to take my stand. If I have recalled this incident it is in order to add that because certain indignant witnesses of this spectacle of impertinence had respectfully cheered the

Cardinal, who replied by an act of obedience to the command given to him, one of your officers ordered a charge with fixed bayonets against the women and children who were respectfully surrounding me although they had not uttered a single word. Yes or no, was this action provocative to our people?

"And during the four days I spent in the country two sentinels were present all the time for the ostensible purpose of guarding my small dwelling, and were interrogating my visitors and following them up when they left in order to find out what they had brought me; in fact you gave every appearance of keeping watch on a criminal with a view to stifling some dark plot.

"Ah! Monsieur le Baron, were I a seditious individual what a fine game I could play! What a fine subject for a sensational *brochure* were it to appear in Paris or London! But I have refrained from anything of the kind. For just as you find me unyielding when it is a question of doing my duty as a Pastor, so do I desire to avoid any incidents connected with my own person.

"I thought it prudent to retire for a few days to the 'Hermite' in order to be away from any possible tendencies to a public manifestation, but with your preconceived ideas about us you imagined that my retreat could only have as a motive some revolutionary intention."

"Revolutionary! Oh, no!"

"Well, let us say, seditious. You must understand then, Monsieur le Baron, that the excitement of the Belgian population against you exists only in your imagination, whereas the indications of ferment which you think you perceive are nothing but manœuvres on the part of your spies, and the idle clamour of your inquisitors.

"The Belgian people remain calm and patient; they

are waiting for their turn to come. There were no *franc-tireurs* at the time when your armies invaded our territory; I hope there will be none when they beat a retreat. I lately had another occasion to address all the clergy in my diocese when they were assembled at Malines for the purpose of making their retreat, and I enjoined on them to tell our people: 'The defence of our rights is entrusted to our army, and it is not your place to deliver irregular assaults against the enemy. Do not by any rashness give colour to the reproach calumniously levelled at you at the commencement of hostilities.'

"Monsieur le Baron, you should know that you do not possess the hearts of the Belgians, and never will! Allow me to tell you this in all frankness, and do not take offence at the apparent rudeness of my language. The Belgians are not doing you any injury, and will not do so, but they have a hatred of your rule deep in their hearts.

"This is the truth, and after over a year's experience it is an astonishing thing that you do not seem to have understood it.

"It is not an unusual thing for foreigners and neutrals, Americans and Swiss to pass through here, and naturally at such times they speak of the war and the German occupation.

"Now would you care to hear the general feeling entertained by foreigners about you? 'The Germans,' they say, 'have their own qualities, certainly, but they are lacking in psychology.'

"And that is just right! You think that the world can be governed by abstract principles. You imagine that the method of rule which you have made successful in Germany ought to be successful here. You are completely mistaken. I have spent my life in teaching; I have learnt that in order to educate a young man one must get to know him before applying systems

to him. To legislate, and to apply the legislation in practice, are two different things.

"Now we come to my answer to the second complaint.

"Monsieur le Gouverneur finds a lack of agreement between the language of my Pastoral Letters and the disposition of goodwill towards himself of which I gave assurance when he promised, on his side, to do everything in his power to heal our wounds."

"Yes, Monsieur Le Gouverneur complains of your Pastoral Letters, and also of the more violent comments made by certain members of the clergy."

"I do not cast any doubt on the sincerity of Monsieur le Gouverneur; when I had the honour of seeing him he spoke in a tone of sincerity in which I had, and still have faith. But there exists between us a fundamental misunderstanding. *He* would like to see us submissive, and *we* claim the right to remain unsubmissive in the interior of our heart and soul. We give external respect to your regulations in so far as they are necessary to public order, but our obedience goes to another quarter. Between intentions and actions there is a margin. The facts correspond ill with the sentiments of goodwill of which you again give assurance."

"I assure you that you misunderstand Baron Von Bissing."

"But, after all, these condemnations, one after the other, of young men and priests who have attempted to cross the frontier, or have aided such attempts, these condemnations to suffer the death penalty, these fusillades—are these proofs of goodwill?"

"Oh! that must needs be; we cannot tolerate the violation of military regulations—spying."

"Well, yes, to a certain extent that must needs be, but simple equity would appoint temperaments suitable to the application of your regulations.

"This is how we understand your way of dealing

with us. You are a colossal power in presence of a very small country. You have trampled on our soil without having been invited to come here, and you yourselves, through your chiefs, have declared that you invaded our territory with regret, from necessity, and with the desire to repair as soon as possible the wrongs you are committing against us. Mindful of the conditions under which you took possession of the greater portion of our territory, you ought, logically, to have said to yourselves: 'We will make Belgium suffer as little as possible; we will observe towards her every consideration compatible with the necessities of our occupation, for, after all, she is not our enemy and it is we ourselves who have reduced her to the necessity of opposing our passage across her territory.'

"Why then bar the road so violently to these few young men who are burning to go and do their duty as patriots by the side of their comrades?"

"But they would all be going!"

"And if they all went, what great harm would that do? You boast of having 8,000,000 soldiers; what could it matter a few hundred, even a few thousand adversaries, more or less?"

"Oh! That is not the point; make your mind easy that we are not afraid of them!"

"Good; we therefore agree. You need not have any fear of them; well, then, let them pass the frontier. They will be practising a virtue which you Germans prize more highly than any other virtue, that of military patriotism. That is therefore so far to the good. Moreover you will be ridding Belgium of young men, sullen, humiliated, and idle, who at any given moment—I am putting myself in your place—may become turbulent and therefore a danger to the public peace which you wish and ought to assure.

"You tell me, further, Monsieur le Baron, that His Excellency, the Governor-General finds a difficulty in

harmonising my habitual attitude with my frequent recourse to him on behalf of my compatriots. You have not, I think, mentioned the word 'ingratitude', but that would sum up this fresh complaint. Well, I am going to astonish, and I fear, wound you."

"Oh, no! Say what is in your mind."

"Well, I will do so in a few words, with the request that you will repeat them to the Governor-General: I bear you no gratitude on the score of your chief whom you invoke, because none is owing to you."

"Oh! Oh!"

"Be patient for one moment; I will explain. There is one personal concession which you are good enough to make me, and I am grateful to you for it, and that is permission to use an automobile."

"But as regards any request—and they are rather frequent, I must confess—which I make to the Governor-General, I scarcely ever obtain anything but a refusal. I have become accustomed to read in the opening sentence of his reply 'Ich bedauere' (I regret). Things have reached such a point that when anyone appeals to me for my intervention with the Governor-General, as a rule I find myself obliged to reply: 'My dear Sir, or My dear Madame, I should much like to be of use to you, but fear I should be doing you a disservice rather than helping you.'

"The coincidence of the Pastoral Letter with the momentary set-back of the German troops is so striking that it can only be explained by a previous understanding between the Primate of Belgium and the Allied Armies—which demonstrates definitely the political character of this Letter. Such is the fourth complaint."

"Monsieur le Baron," he added with a mischievous smile, "my Pastoral Letter is dated September 21st. Now you will have the goodness to agree, is it not so, that for me to compose it, have it printed, and sent out to the clergy, I should require at least eight days. That

takes us back to the 10th or 12th of September. Now on that date the recoil of your troops had not yet taken place, and if I am well informed, the offensive of our Allies had not begun; it was delivered on the 24th of September."

"But you could have known it was to take place."

"No, Monsieur le Baron, I did not know it; you are very much mistaken in regard to me. I am only a Bishop and am not in the secrets of our Staff at Headquarters."

"Your Eminence, then, does not deny resisting the Governing Authority?"

"What resistance?"

"Why, that revealed in your latest Pastoral."

"I beg you will tell me where resistance to the German Authority is manifested therein. The Germans are not even once mentioned by name."

"Not by name, not by name, no! But one must read between the lines."

"Well, well, what an idea, Monsieur le Baron! I am responsible for what I have written and signed, but not, you will understand, for what you are pleased to read into my intentions."

"If by resistance you mean armed rebellion, recourse to violent methods, or incitement thereto, in that case you are within your rights in forbidding us to resist; and we, on our side, are ready to promise to abstain from resistance in this sense."

"But if by resistance you mean the assertion of our rights and a call to prayer in order to obtain God's protection for our country and for the triumph of the sacred cause of patriotism, then in that case I am obliged in conscience to tell you that I shall continue to resist you without flinching."

"And then?"

"And then? What you will!"

At these words Baron Von der Laencken took his

leave. "I shall have to make my report to the Governor-General," he said.

On the 15th October, 1915, appeared a Pastoral Letter entitled: "For the Feasts of All Saints and All Souls." In reply to the despatch of four copies sent to the Governor-General an acknowledgment was received in which he said:

"Although I am not in agreement with Your Eminence on all points, I note, however, with pleasure, that this fresh manifestation differs favourably from the previous ones.

"(Signed) VON BISSING."

Von Bissing did not even reproach the Cardinal for having had it printed without first passing the censorship. Did he possibly flatter himself that he had made him cool down the ardour of his patriotism and change his attitude towards the Occupying Power? If that was his idea, his illusion was of very short duration, for the dispute was soon to be reopened in as acute a form as before in connection with a fresh Pastoral Letter dated the 7th March, 1916, entitled: "On our return from Rome."

Throughout the course of his journey through Switzerland and Italy, the Cardinal had been hailed with enthusiastic acclamation. The German press was disturbed at these ardent manifestations of sympathy, and moved the Occupying Power to take the severest measures against him.

Without allowing himself to be intimidated by these threats, the Cardinal without delay took upon himself to impart to his flock the inspiring impressions he had gathered in the course of his journey. After expressing his joy on finding himself again in the midst of his faithful flock, he stated that his journey had been particularly blessed.

"There are many things I am unable to tell you;

this you will understand. The abnormal situation to which we must submit prevents our unfolding to you quite openly, all that is best and most deeply felt in our soul on your account; coming from Above and touching you most closely, it is my firmest support, and would be a most potent encouragement to you were I able to tell you. But you will have faith in what I say; you will believe me when I assure you that my journey has been particularly blessed, and that I return to you happy, very happy.

“The Holy Father received me with touching kindness. As soon as I arrived he deigned to receive me in his arms, invited me to go and see him as often as possible, gave me leave to tell him everything, to confide in him, and to speak out openly all my thoughts. During the long hours I had the consolation of passing in his august presence he gave me his paternal consolation, enlightened and encouraged me. He understands and shares the anxiety we feel for our religious liberties and our patriotic hopes. He was pleased to embody his deep solicitude, which I eagerly garnered for you, in a dedication written by his august hand at the bottom of his portrait, and I reproduce it for you just as it runs: ‘To Our venerated Brother, Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines, We grant with all Our heart the Apostolic Benediction, assuring him that We are ever with him and that We share in his griefs and anguish, since his cause is also Our cause.’

“You have already heard an echo, I think, of the acclamation which throughout the course of our journey, both in going and returning, greeted the Belgian name in Switzerland and Italy.

“Even supposing, my very dear brethren, that the predestined issue of the gigantic duel at present being fought out in Europe and Asia Minor were still uncertain, the moral triumph of Belgium is an already acquired fact for civilisation and history. In union with

your King and Government you consented to make an immense sacrifice for the country. From respect for our word of honour, and in order to affirm that in your consciences right is above everything, you sacrificed your possessions, homes, sons and husbands, and after eighteen months of coercion you still remain, as on the first day, proud of your attitude, and heroism seems to you so natural that it has not entered into your minds to take any credit to yourselves for it, but if you had been able, like ourselves, to cross over our frontiers and contemplate our Belgian fatherland from a distance, if you had listened to the people, to the 'man in the street' as the English say, the labourer, the humble *employé*, the working woman; if you had seen the living and written evidence of the authorised representatives of the great social forces of politics, the press, art, diplomacy and religion, you would have a better understanding of the greatness of your attitude and your minds would have quivered with pleasure and even, I think, with pride.

"Is this not a victory, my Brothers, and in the measure wherein benefits in the moral order surpass in importance those in the material order, are you not the most glorious victors?

"The natural and supernatural conviction of your final victory is more deeply anchored in my soul than ever. Moreover, if it had been possible to shake it, the assurances given to me by several disinterested and close observers of the general situation, notably by two Americans, would have firmly strengthened it.

"We shall win—have no doubt of this—but we have not yet reached the end of our sufferings.

"France, England and Russia have undertaken not to conclude a peace so long as Belgium shall not have recovered her entire independence, and an ample indemnity. Italy, too, has given in her adhesion to the Pact of London.

"We have no doubt of the future.

"But we must prepare for it.

"Are we not all of us at all times more than the lilies of the field and the little birds hopping from branch to branch, in the hands of the Almighty? You may draw up your plans, place your batteries in position, and order your movements, but it still remains that man proposes and God disposes."

The Governor-General did not waste any time before manifesting his displeasure; next day he gave orders for several arrests and wrote to the Archbishop:

"Your Eminence will again charge me with having misunderstood certain passages of his Pastoral Letter, or that I have given to them an interpretation which was not in your mind. All further discussion on this matter would be fruitless, and therefore I have no intention of going into it again. On the contrary, I am firmly determined for the future no longer to tolerate Your Eminence, in abuse of his high functions and of the respect due to his ecclesiastical robes, employing himself in political propaganda of a nature to excite the population, thereby committing an offence which in the case of an ordinary citizen would entail the death penalty. I therefore warn Your Eminence that from henceforth you must abstain from all political activity."

The engagements necessitated by his pastoral duties did not allow the Cardinal to give a detailed reply to this letter. He contented himself with sending an acknowledgment. A month later he informed the Governor that he had drawn up a memorandum in justification of himself, and asked him to communicate it to the Bishops in Germany and Austro-Hungary. The following are the principal passages:

"I have been held up to malevolent comment, calumny, and outrage by the German press; your Government has required the Belgian newspapers to publish the results of your enquiries; it has allowed the

free circulation of insulting caricatures of me,¹ and when in self-defence I gave two lines of protest to the public my printer had to pay for the service he had rendered me with a year's imprisonment.

"For twenty months, in spite of the sinister memories floating in our atmosphere, in spite of the regulations carried to extremes, requisitions and search warrants, condemnation to fines, prison, deportation and death, which fall thick on it like hail, this brave little nation of Belgium is holding itself in; it bows the head and lowers its eyes before no one, but it has not so far committed one single revolutionary act.

"Its only crime is to be determined not to perish, and our only crime—public administrators, magistrates, clergy and Bishops—is to harden our hearts to think and to say: 'People of Belgium, in the indissoluble union of your two races, Flemish and Walloon, you shall not perish, you cannot perish!'

"I am aware that on the termination of my stay in Rome the German press did its best to have my safe-conduct withdrawn from me. They endeavoured to exploit against me the joint Letter of the Belgian Episcopate to the German Bishops, and my interview with Monsieur Briand.

"But this joint Letter, which did not prevent my going, could not logically prevent my return. As for my interview with Monsieur Briand, no one knew what passed between us, and consequently no one was in a position to pretend that it was used for political purposes.

"The truth is that throughout my journey I was so reserved that many thought this was carried too far. I remember hearing a diplomat exclaim: 'But really, is this poor Cardinal of Malines the prisoner of the

¹ One of these caricatures represented the Cardinal as a parrot on a perch. Von Bissing, standing beside him, with his finger raised was imposing silence.

Germans, even while in Italy?' I gave no one an interview, I delivered no address, and I did not budge one kilometre out of my way.

"The samples of an alleged propaganda which they bring against me give a hint of the trend of their accusations.

"I was committing a political act, it would seem, when '*à propos* of the issue of the war I sought to arouse hopes which were without foundation and contrary to the real facts'; and when, in order to give grounds for these hopes 'I quoted the vague utterances of unqualified persons.'

"But pray what harm is there in giving courage to a suffering people? Should I be seconding the efforts of the Occupying Power if I drove the Belgians to dejection and despair?

"To the very depths of my heart I have confidence in the final success of our cause; this I base on reasons in the natural order which I refrained from developing in my Pastoral with the very object of not appearing to mix myself up with the calculations of politicians and the reckonings of the military staff; over and above this it is based on supernatural reasons of which my conscience is the sole judge. I have this confidence; it sustains my courage, and because I love my faithful people I desire that they should share it. Once more, I ask, where is the harm? I make no pretensions to forbidding you to hold contrary hopes, and when I read the injunctions and speeches of the Cardinals and Bishops of Germany and Austria it does not enter my head to make it a crime for them to exhort their flock and your soldiers to patience and hope. Why should that which is religion on the other side of the Rhine be politics on this side?

"If there be one matter which ecclesiastical right and the rights of men render outside the control of the civil power, it is the faculty of preaching.

“The most inviolable religious liberty is the liberty of apostolic teaching. In the Church of Christ the right of preaching is so sacred that it is vested in the Pope and Bishops alone. The priests only preach in the Bishop’s name and under his regulation. You are right to hold me responsible for the preaching of my clergy, but I do not carry the question of my responsibility before the representative of the Civil Power, but before the Church, before the Sovereign Pontiff.

“Under the Belgian Constitution the Church enjoys entire liberty. Article 14 of the Constitution proclaims liberty of worship and its public exercise. Article 16 declares that the State does not possess the right to forbid Ministers of Religion from publishing their acts.

“Now the Hague Convention (Article 43) imposes on an Occupying Power the obligation of respecting the Constitution and laws of the occupied country.

“When Your Excellency handed over to my tribunal some priests you judged guilty of abusing their privileges in the exercise of their religious ministry, it was no mere act of courtesy on your part; still less was it a concession made at the option of a superior towards an inferior; you were respecting a prerogative belonging to religious authority recognised by Canon Law and the Law of the Belgian Constitution, which International Law forbids the Occupying Power to violate.”

This same affirmation of principle he repeated some time afterwards in a letter to the Governor :

“Putting aside a few hyper-fervid expressions which sometimes escape the lips of the most restrained preachers in the warmth of improvisation, and which cannot be taken into account when the question at issue is the summing up of the general state of mind of a whole class, the preaching of the clergy has not outstepped the limits I have defined in their safeguarding of the interests of patriotism. On twenty occasions I have personally examined sermons incriminated by the

civil authority or the military tribunals ; on each occasion I have observed that the preacher has simply affirmed, with no direct affront to the Occupying Power, that the Belgian Fatherland remains whole in its entirety and that for the conscience of a Belgian citizen the sole lawful authority is King Albert, his Government, his law officers, and his army.

“ If you would be willing, Excellency, to recognise the truth of this elementary right the disputes between you and myself would end.

“ Your predecessor, the late Baron Von der Goltz, understood it ; it is imprudent to wish to stifle the noblest sentiments animating the consciences of a people : ‘ I ask no one,’ he said in a proclamation posted up in Brussels on the 2nd September, 1914, ‘ I ask no one to renounce his patriotic sentiments.’

“ Your Excellency did not disavow this proud declaration.

“ It is in respecting our dignity as patriots that the Occupying Power will find the most solid guarantee of public order.”

He concluded the letter with persisting firmness :

“ We are both bound, one in the civil and military order, the other in the moral and religious order, to work together for the public good.

“ For our starting point let us together take the law—I mean the natural and international law—which recognises the moral sovereignty of the country of Belgium.

“ Suffer this patriotism, while refraining from any direct attack on the Occupying Power and creating no danger of insurrection, to affirm itself—this Christian patriotism which I had no hesitation in calling a religious virtue in a Pastoral Letter I wrote a long time before the war.

“ You are playing your part—and we do not dispute this—when you close the ways of access to foreigners,

and arrest any of our compatriots who try to pass over our frontiers; but do not any longer treat as 'traitors' those heroic young men who, at the peril of their liberty and their lives, are ambitious to go and take their place in our armies. Suffer no longer the military tribunals to brand with the name of 'treason' what is the highest form of citizenship.

"Do not make it a crime for generous souls not to refuse a morsel of bread, an alms, or a temporary shelter to the man of the people who wrenches himself from his hearth and home in order to run to the defence of his country. Do not punish charity.

"Do not any longer allow the setting of pitfalls for worthy people by inviting them to write and transmit correspondence that has not passed the censorship, to give aid to recruits, and to betray their companions in misfortune.

"When some unhappy person is arrested do not prolong without just cause his preliminary detention; supply him with a lawyer so as to give him moral support and to defend himself before his judges; he has a right to this; see that a due proportion is observed between the offence and the penalty; put a stop to the abuse of hard labour and the death penalty exacted under the pretext of intimidation.

"Is it not truly an astounding thing that Belgians should be reduced to imploring strict justice?

"When the German army invaded our soil the Imperial Chancellor acknowledged before the whole world that Germany was violating our rights; he promised that she would neglect nothing to repair the wrong she was doing. It is not then mere respect for justice only that we should look for, but a large measure of goodwill, a spirit of reparation and an efficacious determination to reduce to the minimum the distressing consequences of an occupation vitiated in its origin.

“The Hague Convention is not a decree made by the Occupying Power, it is an international contract. This contract was signed by Germany, as also by Belgium.

“We are powerless to restrain the force of your military power, but it is our right and our duty to relieve our conscience by reminding you that one day you will have to give an account of yourselves before the International Tribunal of the Hague and before history, for the use or abuse you have made of armed authority.

“The Empire you represent undertook at the Hague not to refuse its judgment if one day it should have recourse to it. Your conscience is bound by this engagement.

“Kant, who perverted the philosophic mind of Germany, and whose pernicious influence I flatter myself I have combated all my life, Kant endeavoured to divorce Right from Morality—thereby identifying Right with a Power reduced to a simple faculty of compulsion—but the conscience of humanity cries out against this arbitrary identification which is a justification of despotism.”

On the 17th July, 1916, Lieutenant-General Hurt, the Governor of Brussels, issued an order threatening with six months' imprisonment, and a fine of twenty thousand marks all who should participate in any demonstrations on the 21st July, the national *fête* day, such as public meetings, processions, gatherings, speeches, school feasts, the placing of flowers on certain monuments, etc., decorating with flags either public edifices or private dwellings, and closing the shops and cafés at other than the usual hours.

A further warning was issued by the Governor on the evening before the *fête*: he stated that it had come to his knowledge that a certain group of misguided persons had persuaded the public to refuse conformity with his ruling; the public must be on their guard against

such incitements, for the penalties provided would be applied with the utmost rigour.

These threats were accompanied by the placing of machine-guns in the streets.

The only effect of all these measures was still more to stir up the population of Brussels to an exhibition of their patriotic sentiments; they found a thousand methods, each more ingenious than the other, whereby to celebrate the national fête while keeping to the letter of the ruling.

In most of the churches a Requiem Mass for the soldiers who had fallen on the field of honour took the place of the traditional "Te Deum" at Sainte Gudule; the ceremony was further enhanced by the presence of the Cardinal. The huge church was filled to overflowing, and hundreds of people who had been unable to enter stood in the neighbouring square.

The Cardinal in his mitre ascended the pulpit at the Gospel and delivered an allocution which began with these words:

"Before addressing you I ask you all, my Brethren, to make an act of will—if you should feel keen emotion, restrain it; the hour has not yet come to give adequate expression to all the intensity of our sentiments."

He then went on:

"We are here met together to celebrate the eighty-fifth anniversary of our national independence.

"In fourteen years' time, on this day, our restored Cathedrals and Churches will all be wide open; the crowds will hasten to them; our King Albert, standing erect on his throne will bow down before the Majesty of the King of Kings, in a gesture of freedom, with unconquered brow, surrounded by the Queen and Royal Princes; we shall hear again the joyful peal of our bells, and throughout the entire country, beneath the vaulted roof of our churches, Belgians, hand in hand, will renew their vows to God, to their sovereign and to their

liberties, while Bishops and priests, interpreting the soul of the nation, will entone in an outburst of joyful gratitude a triumphant 'Te Deum.'

"To-day this hymn of joy dies on our lips.

"The Jewish nation, captive in Babylon and sitting in tears on the banks of the Euphrates watched the waters of the river flowing by. Her harps were hanging mute on the willows by the bank. Who could have had the courage to sing the Canticle of Jehovah on a foreign soil?

"'O Jerusalem, land of our fathers,' cried the Psalmist, 'if ever I forget thee may my hand be withered up! Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I cease to think of thee, if thou art no longer my chief joy.'

"The Psalm ends in words of denunciation. We refrain from repeating them; we are no longer under the dispensation of the Old Testament which upheld the *lex talionis*, 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' Our lips, purified by the fire of Christian charity, shall not utter words of hatred.

"To hate is to take the evil wrought by others as an end, and to have pleasure in it. However great our woes, we wish no evil hatred to those who are afflicting us.

"With us our national concord is joined with universal fraternity.

"But above this feeling of universal fraternity we place respect for absolute right, without which there is no intercommunion possible either between individuals or nations.

"Crime, violation of justice, and attempts to disturb the public peace, whether proceeding from individuals or the mass, must be repressed. Consciences are aroused, rendered uneasy, and afflicted so long as the guilty one is not put in his proper place—to use the common expression of spontaneous language which is

so sound and so forceful. By putting men and things in their proper place we re-establish order, bring back a due equilibrium, and restore peace on the foundation of justice. Public vindication, understood in this way, may irritate the sensibilities of a weak mind, but none the less, in the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, the expression and the law of purest charity and zeal are its animating spirit.

“It does not make a target of the sufferings inflicted by others, but wields a weapon for vindicating a right which has been down-trodden.

“How is it possible to love order without hating disorder; to have an intelligent wish to preserve peace, without expelling that which undermines it; to love one’s brother, that is, to wish him well, without desiring that his will be brought into subjection, whether one will or no, by the unfaltering rigour of justice and truth?

“It is from this point of view that we must consider the war in order to understand its full import.

“But it is not quite that. If, in spite of its horrors, war—I mean a just war—possesses such austere beauty, it is because it is the disinterested urge of an entire nation, which gives to it, or is disposed to give to it, what it holds most precious—its life, in order to defend or to vindicate something which it does not weigh up, balance, or wish to monopolise—Right, Honour, Peace and Freedom.

“Do you not feel that for two years the war, and the eager and sustained attention you are giving to it from this very spot, has been purifying you, has been freeing you from your dust and ashes, has been bringing you to your right selves and causing you to rise to something higher than yourselves?

“You are rising to the ideal of Justice and Honour, its drawing is lifting you up.

“Ah! if only we could hold our heroes close in our

arms who are fighting for us over yonder, or in quivering expectation are awaiting in the trenches their turn to join the firing line; if we were to surprise their beating hearts would they not answer thus: 'I am doing my duty; I am sacrificing myself for the sake of justice.' And you, wives and mothers, are telling us in your turn of the beauty of these tragic years. Wives, whose every thought goes out, sad but resigned, to the absent one, bearing to him your aspirations, your long wait, your prayers; mothers, whose divided existence is being worn away in the anguish of each moment that passes, you have given your sons, and you will not receive them back, and each moment our admiration holds us gasping before you.

"The approaching date of the first centenary of our independence should find us stronger, more intrepid, more united than ever. Let us prepare ourselves for it by work, patience and fraternal feelings towards each other. When we recall in 1930 the sombre years of 1914 to 1916 they should appear before our eyes as the most illuminating, the most majestic and, provided that from this day onwards we know how to make up our minds to it, the happiest, and most fruitful in our history as a nation: *Per crucem ad lucem*. It is from sacrifice that light gleams forth."

At the end of the service the organ played the "Brabarçonne." Hardly had the last tones of the national anthem rung forth when an irresistible cry burst forth from every breast: "Vive la Belgique!" "Vive le Roi!"

Then the Cardinal, according to custom, was conducted in procession to the Dean's house close by the church. The crowd thronging round the sacristy door greeted him with acclamations.

In the evening, about eight o'clock, some passers-by recognised the Cardinal's motor-car standing before the door of the Institut Saint Louis; as soon as he entered

it to return to Malines he was greeted by the enthusiastic acclamations of a crowd growing ever more dense. A German officer appeared on the scenes accompanied by a detachment of soldiers, and gave the order to charge with fixed bayonets; many persons were wounded.

Without delay Von Bissing called for explanations. These the Cardinal gave him with good grace in a long letter in which he went over point by point the incriminated passages in his address. Von Bissing was not equal to it, and was overborne in this encounter and had to confine himself to merely sending an acknowledgment.

In a letter dated 28th June, 1916, Von Bissing had expounded the way in which he regarded his *rôle* as Governor, and had enunciated certain principles in relation to the position of the Occupying Power. The Cardinal replied to him with a defence of his own views: The Occupying Power was not a legitimate Authority, but an Authority *de facto*; the sole legitimate Authority in Belgium belonged to the King and to his Government.

Baron Von der Laencken took up the discussion, and this controversy brought forth an exchange of a series of letters which assumed the form of a real political and philosophical memorandum. Here are a few passages:

“At the end of your letter Your Eminence speaks of the influence of Kant. I do not feel myself called upon to enter into a scientific discussion with a philosopher enjoying such a great reputation. I must, however, make the remark that Your Eminence is unjust to Kant when you declare that he has confused the sentiment of right in the minds of the German people. His principal moral precept was: ‘Act in such a way that the edict of your will may serve at the same time as a principle of general legislation.’ Therein must be sought the German conception of duty, right and liberty, independently of any theory of cognisance. While grant-

ing that the philosophy of Kant may be dangerous in theory, it has still to be proved that it has really penetrated the German people. And here I may be allowed once more to bring forward the testimony of Your Eminence. In a controversy with the Belgian atheists you make the remark that 'the great Protestant nations, Germany and the United States, pride themselves in proclaiming officially the sovereign rights of God over humanity.'"

To this the Cardinal replied:

"You think, then, that I have done a wrong to Kant and his influence upon the minds of your fellow countrymen because I denounced the separation between right and morality entailed by his philosophy. In this connection you remind me of the supreme ruling of Kant's moral doctrine, and judge that therein must be sought 'the German conception of duty, right, and liberty, independently of any theory of cognisance.'

"Believe me, Monsieur le Baron, when I say that it had never entered into my head to overlook the existence of a moral doctrine—even of an elevated character, inordinately so—in the philosophy of Kant. It is clear that I posited two terms in this philosophy—right and morality—because I made it a complaint against Kant that he had separated them.

"You are pleased to make nothing of this separation and to declare that the 'German conception' subordinates juridical relations to a precept of morality. So much the better for you and for those who think with you! That proves that nature is often of more value than systems. But consider that in excusing yourself from the separatist theory of Kant you are proving implicitly that I was right in denouncing it.

"Unfortunately all are not able to free themselves so easily from the false theories on which they were brought up.

"These abrupt divisions created by Kant between

right and morality, between morality, the object of an entirely subjective faith, and objective knowledge; and between *scientia*, the object of prolonged and more penetrating reflection—these abrupt divisions, I repeat, have dislocated the unity of the interior man, have shaken the stability of the moral conscience and, as a consequence, have encouraged interested compromises and even its abdication in great moments of crisis.

“How can one explain otherwise the disconcerting spectacle of a great and fine nation, unmindful of its professions, its chosen aspirations, and even of its deepest convictions of Christianity and of the Catholic faith, taking part in the announcement of an open, iniquitous and sacrilegious attack which a powerful Empire proclaims that it means to commit, in full consciousness of its act, upon a friendly, innocent and unprepared State? I can only see one solution to this enigma. ‘An intellectual atmosphere had been created in Germany ranging juridical relations apart from morality. Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche permeated the different layers of society with it; in this atmosphere there was formed and grew and became strengthened, a militarist conception according to which a nation has a right to its life and indefinite development without being responsible for its acts before that moral tribunal of conscience which passes judgment on our ordinary actions; insensibly armed force had lost the appearance of what it really is, namely, the auxiliary and safeguard of a right based on moral duty; in the eyes of public opinion it had become an end, possessing in itself an absolute value, placed outside and above the current laws of morality, and justifying every sacrifice and every attack it judged to be profitable. The great Chancellor of the Empire must have been imbued with these ideas—corollaries of the initial concept of an isolated public right—when he dared to propose to Belgium a bargain the price of which would have been a felony.

“This brings me to the chief object of your correspondence : What, according to the principles of International Law, codified in the Hague Convention, is the nature of the Occupying Power ?

“You consider, Monsieur le Baron, that this Convention contains *lacunae* inasmuch as it outlines no duties to be observed by the occupied country.

“You seem not to have perceived that these *lacunae* are intentional.

“The Hague legislators did not intend to enunciate a philosophy. As statesmen they acted and spoke as jurists.

“It is rather droll, you must confess, that the reproach you bring against me, in a very friendly tone be it said, of having read the Hague Convention with the eyes of a philosopher unacquainted with the realities of our sublunary world, should recoil directly on the subtle diplomatist who brought it.

“If the framers of the Hague Convention did not assign any duties as pertaining to the occupied in regard to the occupant, is not the reason of this that on basic principles they were obeying the sentiment that there could be no question of juridical duties—the sole duties concerned—without correlative rights ? An occupied country, inasmuch as it no longer possesses any rights that it has the power to make the occupant respect, has no longer any duties towards him.

“This view deserves to be elucidated, and I thank you for having given me the opportunity of studying for a moment this interesting problem with you.

“The first Article of the Hague Convention is expressed as follows : ‘The Contracting Parties (Belgium as well as Germany) shall give to their armed land forces instructions conformable to the conditions governing the laws and customs of war on territory included in the present Convention.’³

“ This declaration is an expression of the philosophy of right.

“ Every right is the moral power to possess or to act, but every moral power is not a right in the full meaning of the expression.

“ Right joins to the moral power—which implies the imperative force of a duty—the external means of rendering to the possessor of the right the duty which is demanded.

“ In other words, right is a moral power the exercise of which is guaranteed and sanctioned by force.

“ International law regulates juridical relations between different peoples.

“ In the normal course of the life of nations each possesses its rights in relation to the others, respect for which it is determined to ensure by every means in its power, up to and including the use of armed force. But when the normal course of international life is shattered, and a nation is reduced for the time being to the powerlessness of being unable to make its rights respected by force, what happens?

“ Its rights, its moral rights, certainly remain to it in their entirety, sacred and morally inviolable, but the possessor of these rights, failing efficacious means to maintain them externally and to ensure respect for them by force, is handed over to the mercy of the temporary conqueror or oppressor.

“ A violent situation of this kind is what the protectors of International Law had in their minds.

“ The Hague Convention comes to the assistance of the vanquished or oppressed nation, and then says to the conqueror, that is, to the Occupying Power: ‘ You are faced with a population that for the time being is incapable of resisting the abuses of power to which you may possibly let yourselves go; be moderate, hold yourselves in and do not abuse your strength.

“ “ If the population of the occupied territory, exas-

perated by wrong doings against which it is powerless, were to yield to desperate impulses, you would be drawn into bloody repressive measures without glory to yourselves or benefit to the victims.

“ ‘ Have then the courage to be just, to be humane.

“ ‘ The easier it is for you to abuse your strength, so much the more does your dignity demand that it be not abused.

“ ‘ In the degree in which the vanquished is without means of defence the greater the respect you owe to his rights.

“ ‘ To attack an innocent but strong adversary, and triumph over his resistance, is an injustice.

“ ‘ To trample on this adversary, and finish him off after you have disarmed him, is a monstrosity.

“ ‘ A people placed under the *régime* of an occupation is a disarmed adversary. Their rights, deprived of their natural sanction, and enclosed within the inviolability of their moral conscience, should be doubly respected, firstly, because they persist intrinsically as rights, and secondly, because they assume from their external powerlessness a majesty before which every right-minded man must needs bow.

“ ‘ Though month is added to month, the *régime* of occupation cannot lose its provisional character.

“ ‘ Certainly the prolongation of the occupation must augment the number of administrative measures, and may widen their scope, but the occupant remains without any rights over the people who have no duties towards him; he has no moral and juridical authority, that is, no moral faculty to exact from those he is temporarily governing a submission clothed with the character of a duty before the bar of moral conscience and the rights belonging to a people.’ ”

In the month of February, 1916, the Governor-General with a view, as he said, to satisfy the demands of the

Flemings, but in reality to prepare the way for their separate administration, published a series of decrees concerning the employment of the Flemish language in the primary schools. Certain of these provisions were in open violation of arrangements which had been instituted by the Belgian legislature; whereupon Monsieur de la Vallée-Poussin, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Sciences and Arts, declared in a note he addressed to the Governor-General that he was unable to give his collaboration in the carrying into effect of decrees embodying illegal provisions. The Governor-General informed him that for the future the exercise of his functions, and access to the Ministry, were forbidden to him.

On the 2nd August Baron Von Bissing published a fresh enactment concerning the education of members of the teaching *personnel* of the primary and infant schools, and the issue of diplomas certifying their fitness to teach in the schools.

This decree, which overthrew the entire system of teaching in the normal schools in the Flemish provinces, was in flagrant contradiction to the Belgian law.

The Cardinal protested as follows :

“The regulation on new lines of the languages to be employed in teaching in the normal schools has nothing to do in any sort of way with order and the public life of the country.

“By interfering in this matter the Occupying Power is therefore exceeding the limits of its mission as recognised by the rights of men.

“Further, the ruling contained in Article 3 in the second paragraph of the decree is vitiated by being contrary to the Constitution.

“In virtue of Article 23 of the Constitution the use of the customary languages in Belgium is optional. It can only be regulated by legislation, and such regulation

can be applied solely to administrative acts and judicial matters."

A fresh dispute between His Eminence and the Governor-General arose on the occasion of the Pastoral Letter of the 1st October, 1916, entitled: "The Voice of God."

After speaking of the long trial which had been imposed upon Belgium, the Pastor counselled his flock to give themselves to recollection, to penetrate into the deep meaning of events and with their eyes looking to Eternity to listen to the voice of God. "It is Christ," he said, "who gives us the key to events, by the Mystery of His death and resurrection perpetuated in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. From death arises life." The Letter ended in an exhortation to prayer. "Let us be grateful to God. The independence of our country is now no longer a matter of doubt to anybody; let us bless God for having assured to us its preservation. Let us pray for our dear country, for those present and those absent, for our brave prisoners of war, and our beloved refugees. We cannot exclude anyone from our prayers, not even our enemies; but Christian theology shows us how to graduate our affections. Give your special love, says St. Thomas, to your near relations, your fellow-countrymen and your benefactors. Let us then pray, above all, for our dear soldiers who have us so greatly at heart owing to ties of kinship, patriotism, and devotion to us. And let us not leave out their wives and mothers—those silent heroines of the great European drama. Let us pray for the armies of our allies who on the east, on the west and on the south are fighting with such great valour and tenacity for our common cause." The Cardinal asked too for prayers for Poland and the Armenians.

"And to the very end," he concluded, "let us remain patient and persevering. Keep your hearts high! Let us hasten forward our deliverance. Let us cry aloud to

God in the Sacred Liturgy : ' O God, come to my aid ; O Lord, make haste to help me ; *Deus, in adjutorium meum intende.* ' "

A few days after this was published the printers were arrested, and in the course of the search made at the printing office the police took away 250 copies of the Letter.

On Sunday, the 15th October, when the first portion of the Letter had been read from the pulpit, the Kreischef of Malines sent a request to the Cardinal asking if he could receive that evening at seven o'clock Baron Von der Laencken, the Head of the Political Department. The Cardinal agreed to do so.

At the time appointed the Baron was shown into the reception room.

" I am placed in an extreme difficulty," he said. " I had hoped that Your Eminence would do nothing further of a kind to arouse strife. The Governor-General is furious. ' You realise,' he said to me, ' that the Cardinal still continues to publish matter without recognising my order relative to the censorship, and that he makes use of it to enter into politics.' "

" I have never given you any promise to submit myself to the censorship. You yourself, one day, were good enough to recognise that it would be very difficult for me to do so, and suggested various little ways in which I could elude the censorship, to none of which however I could give my approval. The question therefore had received no satisfactory solution.

" We ought, however, to find some means of coming to a proper understanding.

" I can see only one, and that is that you should shut your eyes, and leave me alone. And in fact I had understood, or rather guessed, if you prefer it, that such was your intention. There is nothing in this Letter to wound you."

" Perhaps not, speaking for myself, but the Governor-

General, who is a soldier and is surrounded by soldiers, must consider the effect the writings of Your Eminence produce in Germany, and *he* thinks otherwise. He is very much put out."

"But come now, what does he see in it to find fault with?"

"There is, first of all, the sentence in which you state that the independence of Belgium is now no longer a matter of doubt to anybody."

"But there is nothing mysterious in this statement. I am not basing myself upon your sentiments nor upon those held by the authorities of your Empire when I state my belief in our independence; I base myself chiefly on the solemn declarations made on several occasions by our allies that they will not consent to talk of peace as long as Belgium shall not be freed. The Holy Father, whom I did not wish to bring into the matter, told me the same thing in Rome last January."

"Then at the end of your Letter you say: 'Let us hasten forward our deliverance.' This sentence especially annoyed the Governor-General."

"But, Monsieur le Baron, the Governor-General in that case does not understand French. It is your business, who understand and speak it, to make him grasp the meaning of this fragment of the sentence by its context. Read then, I beg of you, the whole paragraph."

"Oh! I have read the Letter four times!"

"Good! Then realise what this paragraph says. Don't you see that these words are inserted in that place in order to bring in the prayer from the Liturgy: 'O Lord, make haste to help us.' They mean, 'By our prayers and by our penance let us deserve that the good God may come to our aid and deliver us.' Is any other meaning possible?"

"When I had read it over again I saw that it was possible to give to it the meaning that Your Eminence gives it; but the Governor read it otherwise."

“What meaning could he read into it?”

“He understood it to mean: ‘Let us hasten to drive out the Germans.’”

“What do you intend to do about it? It is no fault of mine if he does not grasp the *nuances* of our language. And what further complaint had he to make?”

“Several political allusions.”

“Namely. . .?”

“In the first place, there is the allusion to Poland.”

“The Governor-General can see on the part of Russia, at least, as many concessions as on that of Germany. Besides, I expressly said that the country had been ravaged by the crossing and recrossing of the armies.”

“And your attack upon the Turks?”

“Pardon me, I do not attack the Turks, but I am defending the Armenians. I attach myself to all those who are suffering, and as I myself, together with all my country, am suffering, I have compassion for the sufferings of others. Is this not natural?”

“But Your Eminence’s Letter attacks the allies of Germany, and that is what angers the Governor-General. In another place you ask prayers for your allies. Your Eminence was doubtless thinking of the English?”

“The English and the French, and all who are upholding the same cause as ourselves. Can you believe that there is one single Belgian Catholic who does not pray for them? But we are praying likewise for our enemies. Would you like me to put it: ‘Let us pray for our armies who in the west. . . .’”

“Yes, yes, that would be very good.”

“Frankly, that is bordering on chicanery. If I were not afraid of wounding you, Monsieur le Baron, I would say that you are trying to pick a quarrel with me!”¹

The interview continued for some time further in the same tone, and the Baron resigned himself to taking his

¹ The Cardinal scores a very clever point over the Baron by using the expression *une querelle d'Allemand*.—Translator’s note.

leave when he saw that he could expect no possible retraction.

Of all the crimes that can be committed in occupied territory perhaps there is not one more abominable than to deport men who are out of work. In the full light of the twentieth century the German Government re-established the slavery of antiquity in defiance of all laws of civilisation. This attack on the liberties of mankind, which had for long been coldly premeditated, was carried out with a cynicism and brutality which aroused the conscience of the whole world.

The moment the Cardinal had knowledge of these iniquitous measures he hastened to address an energetic protest to Baron Von Bissing :

“ Now, here we have your Government carrying away from their homes working men reduced to idleness in spite of themselves, separating them with violence from their wives and children, and deporting them to a hostile country. Many working men have already suffered this unhappy lot, and far more are threatened with the same violent treatment.

“ In the name of the liberty belonging to Belgian citizens to dwell in their homes, and of liberty to work ; in the name of the inviolability of the family, in the name of the moral and religious interests which this system of deportation would gravely compromise, and in the name of his word given by the Governor of the Province of Antwerp, I protest against these rigorous measures.”

Far from abating them they were only developed on an increasing scale. As the German authorities were not successful in obtaining from the district municipalities the lists which they demanded of those out of work, they took upon themselves to deport all the able-bodied men. In presence of these attacks on their liberties, which were becoming more and more monstrous, the

Cardinal in the name of the Belgian Bishops appealed to the public opinion of all the world, and drew up a terrible indictment.

“Day by day the military authorities are deporting from Belgium into Germany thousands of inoffensive citizens to condemn them to forced labour.

“On the 19th October, 1916, we sent a protest to the Governor-General, a copy of which was handed to the representative in Brussels of the Holy See, Spain, the United States, and Holland, but the Governor-General replied to it by a *fin de non-recevoir*.

“At the time we made our protest the order issued by the Occupying Power embraced only those out of work; to-day, all able-bodied men are being carried away pell-mell, packed tight into wagons and deported to no one knows where like a drove of slaves.

“A third decree, dated 13th May, 1916, empowers the governors, military commanders and heads of municipal districts to give orders that men who are out of work be forcibly removed to places where they will have to work. Thus early it was a question of forced labour, but only in Belgium.

“To-day, it is no longer a question of forced labour in Belgium, but in Germany, and for the benefit of the Germans.

“With a view to giving some show of outward plausibility to these violent measures, the Occupying Power laid special stress on these two pretexts, both in the German and Belgian press, namely, that those out-of-work were a danger to public order, and a charge on the official charitable institutions.

“The real naked truth is that every working man deported means one soldier more for the German army. He will take the place of a German working man who will be made into a soldier.

“Bodies of soldiers forcibly enter these law-abiding homes, snatching away young men from their parents,

husband from wife, the father from his children; they stand on guard with fixed bayonets at the doors through which wives and mothers might try to rush to say a last good-bye to their loved ones; they round up their captives into groups of forty or fifty and hoist them by force into wagons; the locomotive is ready with steam up; as soon as the train is loaded a senior officer gives the signal to start, and here we have another thousand Belgians reduced to slavery, and, without any preliminary hearing, condemned to the next severest penalty in the penal code, after the death penalty, namely, deportation. They know not either where they are going, nor for how long. All they know is that their labour will benefit only the enemy. By means of enticing baits or by threats they have extorted from many a form of engagement which they dare to call 'voluntary.'

"As the Pastors of these flocks who are being snatched away from us by brute force, we are torn with grief when we contemplate the moral and religious isolation in which they must languish, and helpless witnesses of the woe and terror in so many homes broken up or being threatened, we turn to those, whether they be believers or unbelievers, in the allied, neutral, and even enemy countries, who have respect for human dignity.

"When Cardinal Lavig rie opened his anti-slavery campaign, Pope Leo XIII gave his blessing to his work and said: 'Public opinion, more than ever, is what rules the world; we must re-act on it. You will only win through public opinion.'

"May Divine Providence inspire all who wield authority, the gift of speech, and the pen, to rally round our humble Belgian flag so as to put an end to slavery in Europe."

A decree of the Governor-General, dated 8th July, 1916, had made it obligatory to declare all stocks of copper, tin, nickel and bronze held in occupied territory.

A fresh order of the 30th December, 1916, had an-

nounced that any household articles of copper, tin, etc., were attached and must be handed over. All contravening this order were punishable under penalties extending to five years' imprisonment and fines of 20,000 marks.

The Cardinal protested to Baron Von Bissing.

"On moral and religious grounds and that of my position I respectfully request of Your Excellency these two things: that you will not treat as culprits those whose consciences will not allow them to actively co-operate in the removal of the metals requisitioned, and that you will take note that under canon law the possessions of religious communities, seminaries, episcopal colleges and churches are possessions belonging to the Church and are inalienable without the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff.

"My loyalty makes it my duty to inform Your Excellency that I am unable to co-operate, or to permit my subordinates to co-operate, in the alienation of these possessions."

The Lenten Pastoral of the Cardinal for the year 1917, entitled "*Courage, mes frères*," was read in all churches of the diocese on Sunday, the 25th February.

It was divided into two parts. In the first the Cardinal praised the moral greatness of the nation, rendering homage to the gallantry of the army and of the prisoners of war, to the patience of the refugees, the heroic firmness of those deported, the strong attitude of the Government, and the indomitable courage of the King. "If there were a few dark spots on the picture," he said, "they will be blotted out in the subsequent pages of history, and only the moral beauty of the nation, its patriotic enthusiasm and tenacity will remain. The great example of military heroism and patriotism shown by the people of Belgium will serve the education of future generations."

In the second part His Eminence pointed out the grandeur of the Christian spirit. If the natural moral virtues are worthy of esteem it was only by the charity which Christ infuses into the soul that virtue obtains full significance, and, strictly speaking, merits Paradise.

“Those who are fighting for the freedom of the Belgian flag are brave men. Those interned in Holland and Germany, who are lifting up to God on behalf of their country their arms loaded with chains, are also brave men. Our exiled countrymen, silently bearing the weight of their isolation, are also serving our Belgian fatherland as best they can, in the same way as all those souls who behind the walls of the cloister, or in the retirement of their homes are praying, weeping and toiling in expectation of the return of the absent, and of our common deliverance.

“In the days of our youth our history professors justly excited our admiration for Leonidas and the three hundred Spartans who, rather than seek safety in an easy flight, allowed themselves to be overwhelmed by the Persian army in the pass of Thermopylae. They aroused our enthusiasm for the six hundred brave men of Franchimont who, after passing through by night the armed camps of Louis XI and Charles-the-Bold, at the risk of life and liberty, all succumbed in making an assault of almost mad rashness and desperate odds. The teachers of future Belgian generations will have to recount features of military heroism and patriotism which are inspiring in other ways. And may we not hope that our generation too will preserve the memory of that union of heart which to-day it is calling forth, and that to-morrow we shall hold a still deeper desire for national unity, less personal asperity in the strife of ideas, less grudging respect for civil and religious authority, in a word, a more universal fidelity both in public opinion and in the secrecy of our souls to our motto : ‘ L’Union

fait la force,' which echoes Christ's words, '*Ut omnes unum sint*, that we may all be one.' "

Baron Von Bissing, judging that the Cardinal had once more issued a political manifesto, raised another protest.

The Cardinal hastened to justify his conduct, stating that it was his duty to encourage, guide and sustain his people who were dear to him and were struggling in the midst of the direst suffering.

"I regretted having to lift up my voice in public just when people were telling me of the generous efforts of Your Excellency to prevent any further deportations and to mitigate the effects of those already carried out, and after I had just signed a confident appeal to His Imperial Majesty. But the complex nature of our position brought about by events must be taken into consideration. We are faced by a Power disposing of powerful means; but we are surrounded by a population which is weak through anguish and suffering."

On the morning of the 19th April, 1917, the Adjutant of Count Bismarck, the Kreischef of Malines, came with the official announcement to the Cardinal that the Governor-General, Von Bissing, had died the night before. On receipt of this communication the Cardinal sent to Baron Von der Laencken the following letter:

"MONSIEUR LE BARON,

"I am very sensible of your thoughtful attention, and I express my gratitude.

"Baron Von Bissing was a believer; I remember him saying to me one day in unmistakable accents: 'I am not a Catholic, but I believe in Christ.' I will pray to Christ very sincerely for the repose of his soul.

"Accept, Monsieur le Baron, the expression of my *considération très distinguée*."

On the 24th April Baron Von Falkenhausen was appointed to succeed Baron Von Bissing.

A discreet intermediary had expressed to the Cardinal a wish to know whether he would be disposed to enter into personal relations with the new Governor-General. His Eminence was of opinion that taking into consideration the present state of mind of the people, an exchange of visits would be inopportune. Whereupon Baron Von Falkenhausen charged the Head of the Political Department with the office of announcing officially to the Cardinal his appointment as Governor-General, and of assuring him that he would always endeavour to secure to the Belgians the exercise of their religious liberty.

The German Government, in their desire to break up the national unity of Belgium, had inscribed on their programme the setting up of two distinct administrative *régimes* in Belgium.

By the end of that year they had made a beginning of the work of disintegration by duplicating certain departments in the Ministry of Science and Arts, and by creating two sets of functionaries charged respectively with the direction of teaching in the schools in the Flemish and the Walloon provinces. With a view to calming the apprehensions that had been aroused the German civil administration had given notice that it was solely a question of internal order, which had nothing to do with any splitting up of the general administration of the country.

On the 23rd March, 1917, the Occupying Power threw away the mask. Acting on a promise made by the Imperial Chancellor a few weeks before to some misguided members of the Council of Flanders who had gone to Berlin to interview him, a decree was issued by which Belgium was to be divided into two administrative provinces, one of which was to be governed from Brussels and the other from Namur.

On receiving news of this move the patriotic feelings of Belgium were aroused, and numerous protests were

sent by the notabilities of the country to the Governor General.

Senators and Deputies of the different parties met together to discuss the attitude to be taken; all were of opinion that passive resistance to the decree of the 23rd March was incumbent upon them. The feeling uppermost, to which all the members unanimously agreed, was that only the higher officials of the Central Administration should resign, and that those of inferior rank should retain their liberty either to resign or to remain at their posts.

The Belgian Government, when consulted, explicitly approved this temperate solution of the difficulty.

The Occupying Power was not long in taking action against the recalcitrant officials. Under the pretext that by withdrawing themselves from the declaration of loyalty which they had signed at the commencement of the occupation, and by refusing to continue their services, they were offering active resistance to the execution of lawfully imposed regulations, they were deported to Germany.

The Cardinal made a strong protest to Baron Von Falkenhausen against these flagrant violations of International Law and the Hague Convention. The latter confined himself to replying that he was not willing to discuss anything with the Cardinal but questions relating to religious matters.

Through the intermediary of the Nuncio, the Holy See expressed a wish to be accurately informed as to the attitude of the Belgian Bishops as regards the separation of Belgium into the two administrations ordered by the Occupying Power. The Cardinal acceded to this wish by sending to His Holiness, Benedict XV, a letter the principles contained in which were as follows:

“In reality it is not so much a question of administrative measures as an attempt to split up the nation.

“No one in Belgium has had any doubt about this

neither can any foreigner since the publication of the 'Denkschrift' or 'Will' of the late Baron Von Bissing. Our late Governor-General has laid bare therein his hope that by flattering the naïve aspirations of a few ultra Flemings, of separatist tendencies, German policy might succeed in detaching them in their hearts, and possibly in fact, from the Walloon section of the country, and might also prevent them from separating themselves from the hegemony of the German Empire. The Belgians realise that they must oppose by all legal means in their power their anti-national policy. The practical unanimity of nearly all Flemings and Walloons, and the citizens of all the different parties, both in Occupied Belgium and in that portion that is still free, are ranged on the side of their King and Government.

"These measures are in contravention of Article 43 of the Hague Convention of the 18th October, 1907, and are a violation of our constitutional liberties on the question of languages. Up till now the functions of the central administration had been fulfilled by those delegated by the legitimate authority under the supervision of the Occupying Power. From now onwards there will no longer be any central authorities of national origin. The Occupying Power is usurping the rights of the nation, and is so well aware of this that it endeavours to throw dust in the eyes of foreigners by calling to life again the odious and grotesque comedy of the 'Conseil de Flandre,' in order to make them believe that this dualist organisation is ratified by a section of the nation.

"Very large numbers of those employed in the different Ministries, conscious of their duty of loyalty to the Belgian Government, were ready to send in their resignations rather than participate in a policy of national dismemberment. A few persons, however, foreseeing reprisals on the part of the Occupying Power, and more careful to safeguard the private interests of the families of the officials, or to obtain certain party advantages,

than to protect the more important issue of the unity of the nation, would have liked to advise all the employés to submit to the caprice of the Occupying Power in order to avoid something worse. These two views were submitted to the Government at Havre, which replied substantially as follows: 'The higher officials should resign; the under officials may remain at their duties.'

"Whereupon the Directors and Secretaries of all the Ministries at once complied with the wishes of the Belgian Government, and, as was expected, were sent to Germany as captives.

"The Occupying Power hoped to prevent the exodus of the under officials which it had set in motion; with very rare exceptions all put to the hazard the livelihood of their families and their own liberty with a proud disinterestedness which no one can refrain from admiring.

"I am well aware that all the neutral powers do not share our view. It would have been so much more convenient if we had uttered a verbal protest 'so as to safeguard the principle,' and then to have bowed our backs in order to save ourselves any further trouble. People used the same language at the time of the iniquitous and brutal invasion of our soil by a military power before whom we must inevitably succumb. Belgium voted for sacrifice. It is her honour before God and before the bar of history. In face of these latest perfidies of administration she could have allowed herself to go to sleep, and, later on, send an academic protest to the authorities of the Empire. But a policy of this kind does not accord with the temperament of our people. A Belgian has no love for the man who savours of conventionalism. He prefers action to words, but knows how to use moderation.

"In fact, the attitude of the nation over this question of *séparation administrative*—the gravest question that the Germans have precipitated under the pretext of

governing us, as a diplomatist said to me—the attitude of the nation has been one of admirable moderation, that is, one of well-considered action. Our temporary rulers will require unusual effrontery to dare to call our conduct insurrectionary; it is as restrained in its opposition as it is proud in its refusal to submit.

“The truth is that the Occupying Power is doing its level best to drive us to the end of our tether. And it is astounded at not meeting with success. We give way neither to flattery nor violence, but during the space of three years we have not yet, on one single occasion, made any attempts at open resistance. This dignity of self-control is something that German militarists do not understand.

“While they are daring to complain of our lack of respect for their bureaucratic regulations, they continue by stages to deport our people, and, contrary to their promises renewed ten times over to the highest authorities, are putting hindrances in the way of their repatriation; for the past nine months—since the 11th November, 1916—thousands of harmless Belgian citizens, who had been reduced to idleness by the calculated disorganisation of our industries, have been suffering hunger, anguish and exhaustion in exile; by dint of wearing down their physical strength they have extorted from them some verbal or written acquiescence in their forced labour, against the real dictates of their hearts, and then by travestyng this acquiescence thus wrested from them into a voluntary act, they enter them on their lists as willing workers whom they need no longer return to their own homes. Is this not bad enough? But pray let no one believe in their sincerity when they announce that they will stop the deportations provided that certain conditions of sheep-like docility and approving silence prevail in the part of Belgium under occupation.”

A rumour had gone round Belgium that the military authorities were going to lay hands on the church bells.

Without waiting for the official publication of an order for this measure His Eminence, after consulting the Bishops of Namur and Liège, informed the Governor-General of his apprehensions and protested in advance against this sacrilegious act; as regards the Bishops of Bruges, Ghent and Tournai, communications were practically cut off.

“What a sad thought it would be to the faithful that the metal adorning the belfries, provided in the majority of cases by their liberality, should be converted into cannon and munitions for an enemy army and destined to carry death into the ranks of their fellow-countrymen.

“By Article 46, the Hague Convention makes it the duty of the Occupying Power to respect both the exercise of religion and private property, individual and corporate. Article 53 lays it upon him to limit requisitions in kind to the needs of the army of occupation.

“It is superfluous to say that bells and organs do not come within the needs of the army of occupation; they come under the heading of private property and are used in the service of the Catholic religion.

“In the name of International Law, subscribed to by the highest authority in the German Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia, I beg Your Excellency to prevent the promulgation of this measure with which the Church in Belgium is threatened.

“As a Catholic Your Excellency is not unaware that the violent seizure of a church bell is sacrilege.”

The Holy See also made urgent representations on its own part to the Government of the Empire to prevent the measures that had been announced from being put into execution.

Thanks to all these pressing representations the threat of the Governor-General did not take effect, and the church bells in Belgium were saved.

At the beginning of the winter of 1917/1918, although the output of the Belgian collieries had not sensibly

diminished, coal had become almost impossible to obtain; the Occupying Power restricted more and more the amount left for the use of the Belgian population.

By order of the Governor-General, Baron Von der Laencken warned the Cardinal that the greatest economy was necessary in the use of coal.

His Eminence answered the Governor-General in a personal letter showing by figures that if the scarcity of coal was so great the reason for this was solely the requisitions made by the Germans. Speaking generally, the scarcity and, as a consequence, the dearness, of the products of Belgian soil, was due to the nefarious action of the "Centrales," the organisations created by the Occupying Power under the plausible pretext of supervising the distribution of these products among the population, but the principal purpose of which was to divert the greater part to the assistance of Germany.

"Belgium is a fertile country, and our people are impoverished to the extent of suffering hunger and cold.

"The output from agriculture, factories and mines is normally one of prolific intensity, and now, after three years of occupation, we see our factories closed, and are told that the product of our soil and mines is no longer adequate to support our most urgent needs.

"The products of our soil are practically not to be had, and sell at exorbitant prices. Here is one simple example: potatoes are sold at 2fr. 50 to 3 francs the kilo. Our soil produces a sufficient quantity to provide each inhabitant with 600 grammes a day—after making allowance for the quantity required for feeding the cattle and for certain industries—and the inhabitants of Brussels have only had, from September, 1916, to September, 1917, 60 grammes of potatoes per head per day!"

The Governor-General, rather than reply to the arguments of the Cardinal, found it simpler to inform him, as he had done previously, that he was not disposed to

discuss with His Eminence questions which had no direct connection with religious interests.

But the latter justified his intervention by stating that his duty laid it upon him to interest himself in the physical and moral sufferings of his flock.

Since the Governor-General was determined to keep exclusively to questions of a religious order in his relations with Archbishop's House, the Cardinal denounced to him some grave offences against religion which had been committed in different places by German soldiers. He also complained of the support given by the Occupying Power to the campaign of calumny being waged against him by the "activists." The latter were declaring publicly that if the Flemish prisoners in Germany had no priests speaking their own language, the fault lay with the Cardinal. Now, as long ago as October, 1914, he had demanded authority from the German Government to send priests "who spoke our two national languages" to the camps of the prisoners.

"For the last five months the 'activist' journals have been organising a campaign of calumny and insult against me. So far as I myself am concerned I hold it in contempt. But there is one subject against which I must indignantly protest because, by its constant repetition it might mislead simple people as regards the principles governing my ministry as a Pastor. These newspapers make me responsible for the absence of confessors speaking our two national languages in the camps of the civil and military prisoners, and in the cantonments of the deportees. Now your Administration is aware that I have multiplied in vain direct and indirect attempts to put an end to this deplorable state of affairs. My calumniators are guilty of dastardly conduct because they know your Government assures immunity to them and deprives us of the means of defending ourselves."

The Governor-General had not replied to the Cardinal's letter of the 24th November, under the pretext

that he would only treat with him on purely religious questions. But Baron Von der Laencken took upon himself to plead the cause of the "centrales," and to justify the measures taken by the Occupying Power for distributing the products of Belgian soil.

It was a bad case, and the pleading was weak.

At the time of the requisition of all wool stuffs the Cardinal, having been warned that the old people in the almshouses under the care of the Little Sisters of the Poor, were threatened with having their wool mattresses taken from them, begged Baron Von der Laencken to intercede with the Governor-General on behalf of these unfortunate people.

After an examination into the matter which lasted for three weeks the Governor-General decided that 400 old people, out of a total of 450, who were housed in the almshouses in Rue Haute, Brussels, were to be deprived of their wool mattresses.

In the name of the Belgian Bishops the Cardinal drew up a protest against the scheme projected by the Imperial Government of holding Protestant services in certain Catholic churches.

"By their consecration and solemn benediction our churches are set apart for the perpetual and exclusive use of the Catholic faith. To give to them arbitrarily another purpose is, in the eyes of the Church, a wrongful profanation, and partly sacrilegious, so much so that in certain cases provided for by the Law, churches profaned in this way have to be reconciled by an expiatory rite before being restored to Catholic worship.

"Condemned by theology, the system of dual worship has been, and still remains, proscribed by numerous decrees of the Roman Congregations.

"The spectacle of services of a religion opposed to their own being held in their sanctuaries would wound our faithful people in their deepest sentiments. The Belgian people, as a whole, both in the towns and country,

are by their historic traditions attached with all their heart to the Roman Catholic religion. To hold in the same church before their very eyes both Dissenting and Catholic services, would be inflicting an outrage on their consciences which would be deeply wounding them."

Under the vigorous pressure of the allied troops the German army was beating a retreat. The victorious offensive in Flanders, begun on the 28th September, 1918, had already freed a considerable portion of Occupied Belgium. The German Governor-General knew that his days were numbered.

On Thursday, the 17th October, at three p.m., Baron Von der Laencken called at the Archbishop's Palace, and, in the name of the Governor-General and the Government in Berlin, handed to the Cardinal the following declaration written in French—a document of priceless value :

" You are to us the incarnation of Occupied Belgium and are her venerated Pastor to whom she hearkens. And therefore it is to you that Monsieur le Gouverneur-Général and my Government have charged me to come with the announcement that when we evacuate your soil we will, of our own free will and in good part, return to you your Belgian political prisoners and deportees. They will be free to return to their homes, and this will begin next Monday, the 21st inst. As this announcement must rejoice your heart, I am happy to be the bearer of it, all the more so because I have not lived for four years among the Belgians without learning to esteem them and to appreciate their patriotism at its true value."

This was the consecration of the Cardinal's *prestige*.

In the course of a friendly chat among some French writers and politicians, remarks Léon Bérard, it happened that they were discussing the use one of them

had made of the word "prestige." The difficulty seemed to be greater because our classic language had made little use of the word in the acceptation we give to it to-day, and because it is employed in modern language very unequally, and without much discernment or strict accuracy. It was agreed that "prestige" was deserving of being removed from the smooth promiscuity of oratorical synonyms, and that it only justified its meaning, lustre, and true value by returning to a stricter sense; finally it would be more fitting to arrive at this by good examples than by ingenious definitions.

"An excellent interpretation, and one very suitable for discountenancing this abuse of language," suggested a writer, "would be to say that Cardinal Mercier is a man who possesses 'prestige.'" He it was who opposed to the myth of primitive violence the protest offered by eternal wisdom and reasoning humanity. His views as a philosopher and his apostolic heart ruled for the space of four years a diocese without name or frontiers which brought together the upright minds and just souls of the whole world.

On the 20th October the following pronouncement was read in all the parishes :

"Our hearts are hopeful. Peace has not been signed. So suddenly are events precipitating themselves forward, and they are sometimes so disconcerting, that no one this day can reckon it as certain.

"We catch, however, a gleam of the dawn.

"We bring you a new sign of coming events. This day, the 17th October, the Head of the German Political Department came to announce to me, in the name of the Governor-General of Brussels and the Government at Berlin, that the Belgian political prisoners, whether interned in Belgium or in Germany, and the Belgians deported to Germany, will be set free as soon as Belgium is evacuated. The liberation of prisoners interned in the prisons of Occupied Belgium, apart from the military

concentration camps, will begin on Monday, the 21st of this month.

“ Here too is the written declaration which the delegate of the German Government left in my hands. From personal motives, which you will understand, I had hesitated to give you the entire text. But on further consideration I decided to do so.

“ You see, my very dear brethren, that God is with us. Your ardent appeals to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, Mary our Mediator, have been granted.

“ Continue of one heart in prayer.

“ Keep calm and dignified.

“ The hour of our definite liberation, and a victorious peace, is approaching. Courage and confidence ! ”

PART III

THE EVENING OF A BEAUTIFUL LIFE

CHAPTER I

THE MALINES CONVERSATIONS

Brief account of the efforts that had been made towards Reunion. Lord Halifax and the Abbé Portal. Sympathetic reception of Lord Halifax by the Cardinal, and a scheme of meetings to discuss the possibilities of Reunion arranged. The last meeting held at the Hospital of St. Elisabeth. Touching reception of Lord Halifax by the Cardinal on his death-bed.

“AND not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me : that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee : that they also may be one in Us : that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them : that they may be one, as We also are One.”—St. John xvii, 20-22.

Hardly had the great war finished when a desire for the re-establishment of religious peace by a return to religious unity showed itself in many quarters.

People were somewhat surprised, wrote Eugène Tavernier, to see the expression of such a wish put forward with so much earnestness. Europe, in ruins, was still trembling with the fierce fighting instincts which for the space of over four years had been exercising absolute supremacy. Nevertheless, underlying the out-

ward appearance of opposing forces and of influences acting in different directions, there was no dissimilarity of purpose in that desire; far from it.

To make good a world lying in ruins cannot be done without having recourse to moral forces, but harmony and collaboration require a community of doctrine and faith. Now it is through the agency of the Churches that doctrine and faith are made known and maintained.

But the Churches are divided, and so the desire of bringing about their reunion is legitimate and salutary in the highest degree.

This desire is a permanent one in the Catholic Church, and is full of life and ardour which neither man's hostility, circumstances, revolution, nor time, have exhausted. In the case of the separated Churches this movement has been awakened at times, assuming now and again a consistency which is nothing short of astonishing. Among Anglicans it has become more and more acknowledged and courageously entertained, and has set on foot a course of scholarly historical and theological studies, and of religious practices as well. The movement has advanced many stages in our time, and in some cases very rapid stages.

"We cannot really love our faith without experiencing the desire to see it spread far and wide, and without sharing in some degree the zeal of the Apostles in making it widely known."¹

This was the leading motive in the mind of Cardinal Mercier in the Malines Conversations; we may say it was the chief concern of his latter years, and it will remain the seal he set on his apostolic labours, and the crowning of his life's work. It is a long cherished ideal, in the realisation of which many attempts have been made in the course of time. Great efforts to re-establish broken unity have been made,

¹ Cardinal Bourne, at the Eucharistic Congress at the Albert Hall, 13th September, 1908.

notably in the seventeenth century by Bossuet and Leibnitz, who sought to find some common meeting ground. Nearer our times, Spencer and Ambrose Phillips de Lisle, and the association to promote the union of Christianity, without mentioning numerous leagues of prayer. The seed has been sown; it ought to germinate.

In 1889, Lord Halifax and the Abbé Portal, a member of the Lazarist Congregation, met at Madeira, and this meeting led to the problem of the Union of the Churches entering on a new phase. Both thought they had found a providential common ground between the English and Latin Church which had in vain been long sought for in the validity of Anglican orders. If the Church of England had real Bishops, real priests, and real Sacraments, if she held the Eucharist and if God really dwelt in her Churches, nothing more was needed to join her up again *en bloc* with the Church of Rome than a canonical bond of jurisdiction, and would it be such a difficult thing to bring about this corporate union in the form of some kind of federation between two Churches which were hierarchically constituted? This was the line taken by Lord Halifax.

Under the name of "Dalbus" the Abbé Portal brought the matter before the public in a work which made a great stir, "*Les Ordinations Anglicanes.*"¹

A series of learned polemics were written, in which Abbé Duchesne, Abbé Boudinhon and Dom Aidan Gasquet (now Cardinal Gasquet) took a notable part. From this tilting of lances in the arena of theory and history light flashed forth. The validity of Barlow's consecration, the sufficiency of the rite of Edward VI, and the intention of the consecrating prelates appeared, to say the least, a matter of doubt, and, as a theologically certain consequence, the consecration of Bishop Parker

¹ See the learned articles by Abbé Bardoux on the preliminaries to the Malines Conversations, published in the *Documentation Catholique* to which we are indebted for the following account.

had to be considered null and void. Even a theoretic doubt in this case entailed nullity.

On April 14th, 1895, Pope Leo XIII addressed a letter "Ad Anglos," which was characterised with such affectionate consideration for our separated brethren that *The Times* declared that a Pope so prolific in expedients would prove very accommodating. Lord Halifax came back from Rome marvelling at the Holy Father's breadth of mind. A Roman Commission was appointed to study the question of Anglican Orders. It was presided over by Cardinal Mazzella, and Mgr. Merry del Val acted as Secretary; it consisted of eight members, of whom four were English, two Italians, one French and one Spanish. Mgr. Gasparri and Abbé Duchesne took part in it.

In order to allay the misunderstandings of those in favour of union, who did not perceive the radical fault in the English Hierarchy, Leo XIII issued a second Letter in June, 1896, in which he explained in calm and precise language what is really the Catholic Hierarchy instituted by Christ. After working for six weeks the Commission communicated the result of their examination to the Pope who, accepting their conclusions declared on September 13th, 1896, that ordinations conferred after the Anglican rite must be considered "wholly invalid and null."

In 1910, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church of the United States, which had accepted the idea of Christian unity, appointed a Commission to call together a Conference with a view to examine questions relating "to faith and orders." At the same time they invited all Christian communions confessing our Lord Jesus Christ to be God and Saviour to unite in preparing for this Conference and in bringing it to a successful issue.

The calamities brought on by the war did not stop the movement, and in 1920 the Church of England, taking

the lead into her own hands, convoked the Bishops of her communion to Lambeth Palace. The meeting continued from the 15th of July to the 7th August.

An appeal, addressed to all members of the Christian community concerning their reunion, was adopted and made public. This appeal stated that "we think the time has come when all the separated groups of Christianity should agree to forget the past and reach out towards the ideal of a reconciled Catholic Church." It also recommended the authorities of the Anglican Communion to invite the other ecclesiastical authorities in the same district to confer with them in order to "take measures in common to restore the unity of the Church of Christ."

As a condition of access to these conferences the appeal confined itself to the following: the recognition of the Holy Scriptures as the rule of faith, acceptance of the Sacraments of Baptism and of the Eucharist, and the holding of a priestly ministry having not only the interior call of the spirit, but a mission from Christ and authority from the Church. This appeal was addressed to all confessions, including the Church of Rome.

With these preliminaries before us we will now proceed to a study of the Malines Conversations.

In a matter of such delicacy we cannot do better than allow ourselves to be guided by the Letter addressed by Cardinal Mercier to his clergy on the 18th January, 1924, in which he informed them of his efforts towards the union of the Churches.

For more than two years he had been in intimate relations with certain Anglican personalities, and visits to him as well as correspondence had taken place; both sides had undertaken to remain silent as regards these confidential proceedings. The Archbishop of Canterbury, while keeping secret the matter of these conversations, gave it as his opinion, after obtaining the approval

of his colleagues, that the time had come to establish definitely the attitude of his co-religionists.

It was a courageous act on his part considering the attitude of mind, openly declared or secretly held, and still very general in English non-Catholic circles, which is often described by the word "anti-papal"; it was easy to foresee that any evidence of deference, even only implicit and indirect, shown to a Cardinal of the Church of Rome, would bring on the Archbishop's head something other than sympathy and approval.

Protestant circles in England, and even a certain number of Catholics, were greatly disturbed at these revelations. For the space of several weeks the newspapers and reviews found in them matter for lively controversy the echo of which reached our ears; the desire of the public to have every morning some sensational news, and the untiring ardour of the journalists to provide them with it, went on increasing, and created around these peaceful meetings at Malines a disturbing atmosphere which was foreign to them. These influences made it seem necessary to the Primate of Belgium to establish the facts in their real simple truth.

Both the religious authorities, and all order-loving men who were paying attention to the evolution of ideas and events, were justly dismayed at the rapidity with which the disappearance of faith in the supernatural was leading to the negation of all religion. This was a general phenomenon, but one that went deeper in Protestant than in Catholic countries.

In 1877, Newman wrote that he had always thought that we had reached a period of general and widespread unbelief. In fact during recent years the waters had risen like a deluge. He foresaw that a time would come after his death when only the tops of the mountains would appear, like islands in a waste of water, and he added that he was speaking particularly of the Protestant world.

The evil especially affects that portion of Christianity because the divergencies in doctrine of those bodies which keep on multiplying deprive really religious-minded men of the luminous and comforting spectacle of unity in faith and a fixed rule. The disaggregation of the Protestants leads to a liberalism in religious matters, that is, to a kind of vague belief that all religions represent free opinions which are valid for the reason that not one of them is in a position to claim for their own support any proofs of a positive and Divine Revelation. Hence this religious indifferentism conduces inevitably to irreligion.

Clear-sighted Protestants saw Newman's predictions being realised. Those of them who had kept their faith in the Divinity of Christ and His Church discerned the danger and were anxious to use their combined efforts in removing it.

A group of men holding these views was received at the Archbishop's Palace at Malines by the Cardinal and Mgr. Van Roey, his Vicar-General.¹

The two first visitors to Malines, in October, 1924, were Lord Halifax, whom all England venerates

¹ Mgr. Van Roey was appointed Archbishop of Malines and Primate of Belgium in succession to Cardinal Mercier with whom he had worked for twenty years. He was born at Voorselaer (Campine) on the 13th January, 1874. He entered the Grand Séminaire at Malines in 1894, and was ordained priest in September 1897. In 1901, he was appointed Professor at the University of Louvain. On his accession to the Archbishopric of Malines, in 1906, Cardinal Mercier called upon Abbé Van Roey to assist him, and at the age of thirty-four made him his Vicar-General. In 1909, he was made Monsignor. Mgr. Van Roey has the reputation of being one of the most eminent theologians. He is also a most admirable administrator. He has made his name as one who is more solid than brilliant, more deep thinking than eloquent. For twenty years he possessed the absolute confidence of Cardinal Mercier, and was his right hand. Cardinal Mercier called upon his deep knowledge as a theologian at the time of the Conversations of Malines, and he was the only Belgian priest to take part with the Cardinal in them. His close and unremitting collaboration with the Cardinal had prepared him more than any other to succeed him, and the choice made by Rome in his favour has been unanimously approved.

without distinction of creed or party, and Abbé Portal, a priest on the mission, who in the time of Leo XIII had been closely concerned in the question of Anglican Orders.

The noble Lord is the most characteristic representative of those fervent and upright Anglican souls who believe practically all that we believe, Catholics in heart if not in name, who are held back by some thin and mysterious threads in the barque that at present bears them. In the midst of the sharp squalls and sandbanks towards which their ship is heading, they still preserve intact and bright their light in the chaos—their Catholic faith. A scarcely weakened echo of the grand voice of the Church, they remain where they are in order to preserve the contact and to remind those who are floating about on every wind of doctrine of that port where we keep on waiting for them.

The following were the preliminaries to the meeting as related by him :

“Like everyone else I knew the prominent position which the Cardinal had occupied during the war, and how completely, by his independent and courageous attitude, he had won the respect and admiration, not only of his fellow countrymen, but of all throughout Europe who had been brought into contact with him.

“I was also aware, owing to my intimacy with the late Mr. Wilfrid Ward, of the kindness and consideration shown by the Cardinal to Father Tyrrell, with whom I had been acquainted during the unhappy circumstances which overshadowed the ending of his life.

“Before leaving England I asked the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had already been in correspondence with the Cardinal in reference to the appeal put out by the Bishops at Lambeth on behalf of Christian reunion, to give me a letter to him saying that I was a person who had all my life been interested in ecclesiastical affairs, and who, if he would be good enough to receive me,

though in no sense representing English ecclesiastical authorities, might be trusted not to take advantage of any civility which the Cardinal might show me, and to whom, therefore, he might talk freely if he desired to do so.

“At Malines the Abbé Portal, with whom I was travelling, and I were received by the Cardinal who, as it happened, was only at home that one day. He was good enough to ask us to luncheon, after which we had a long conversation, in the course of which I alluded to the Lambeth appeal, and my anxiety to do anything in my power to further the reunion of Christendom, and to the present condition of the world, which made reunion, if it could be accomplished, more necessary than ever. I went on to ask whether, knowing as I did the great and influential position the Cardinal occupied, he would consider the possibility of such conferences being held as Leo XIII had contemplated in 1894 between members of the Anglican communion and representatives accredited by Rome, for the purpose of discussing the points which now separated the two Churches. I pointed out that the Lambeth appeal afforded the opportunity of such conferences, and added that, though I spoke only for myself, I believed if any proposal of the sort were made on behalf of the Holy See it would be welcomed with satisfaction by the authorities of the Anglican Church.

“Nothing could have been kinder or more sympathetic than the Cardinal’s attitude. He said the reunion of Christendom was a matter he had very much at heart, and that if I would draw up a statement of some of the principal points which I thought should be discussed, he would willingly go into the matter, and be glad to receive any who would come to Malines for the purpose of such discussion.

“I stopped in Paris on my way back to England, where I saw M. Isvolsky, the brother of the late Amba-

sador at Paris, who, before the Revolution, had been Procurator of the Holy Synod in Russia, and several French priests and laymen, all interested in the cause of reunion. On my return I proceeded to draw up such a memorandum as the Cardinal had suggested, and submitted the draft to friends whose criticisms and advice I was anxious to obtain."

Lord Halifax and Abbé Portal returned in December of the same year, accompanied by two noted Anglicans, Dr. Armitage Robinson, Dean of Wells, an intimate friend of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Dr. Frere, Superior of the Religious Community of the Resurrectionists, since become Bishop of Truro—both of them authors of highly-esteemed works on scriptural subjects and ancient Christian literature.

From the outset it had been agreed that the object and eventual results of the discussions should remain private until such time as their publication should be judged opportune by mutual consent.

A second meeting took place in March, 1925, and a third in November of that same year, in which also took part, besides those mentioned above, Dr. Charles Gore, the former Bishop of Oxford, who had resigned his active ministry in order to devote himself exclusively to religious studies, Dr. Kidd of Keble College, Mgr. Battifol, Canon of Notre Dame, a scholar in high repute for his works on Christian origins, and Abbé Hemmer.

It should be stated that these meetings were of a strictly private character, and were therefore not the outcome of different ecclesiastical authorities sending official representatives to meet each other for discussion.

This exchange of views did not thus amount to "negotiations" as has too often been stated.

In order to "negotiate" a mandate is required, and there was none on either side. Neither the authority represented by those taking part, nor the community to

which they belonged, were pledged. It was enough for the Cardinal to know that he had the encouragement and blessing of the Sovereign Pontiff.

They entered on their task animated by the same desire for mutual understanding and fraternal aid.

It was clear that on several fundamental questions there was noteworthy disagreement between the two groups, and both sides were fully aware of this. But if truth possesses its rights, charity has its duties. "We thought, by speaking openly and with the persuasiveness of intimacy, that possibly all the mistakes made in a vast historic conflict which has lasted for centuries, might not be on one side only; that by defining the terms of certain questions in dispute we might cause certain prejudices and matters of distrust to fall away, that we might dissipate ambiguities, and make level the ways by which a loyal soul, aided by grace, might end by discovering in what way he could be pleasing to God, or might be able to find the truth again."

The fact remains that at the close of each of these three meetings, as of those which were to follow, the members taking part felt themselves more closely united and more open with each other than when they first came together.

Notwithstanding, we may be sure that when essential questions arose—such as the Primacy of the Pope as defined by the Vatican Council, which was the first question uppermost, and the last—neither the Cardinal nor his friends had for one moment any thought of sacrificing to an insensate desire for union at all costs one single article of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman *Credo*.

The meetings were therefore "conversations"; they concerned solely the personal responsibility of those taking part in them; they were of a friendly character, instructive and edifying.

"No book has the force of an oral discussion. Con-

versation reveals intimately felt matters which do not come out in print.

“Men are made to love one another; it is no rare thing that people, each strangers to each other, who at a distance might conceive themselves to be enemies, succeed in enjoying the charm of a close intimacy they could not have suspected, when they really come to understand each other.”

It was perhaps the first time for four hundred years, as one of them said, that men given to study, Protestants and Catholics, had been able to discuss together in entire frankness, for hour after hour, the gravest matters dividing them intellectually, without the cordiality of their relations being disturbed for one moment, or their confidence in the future disconcerted.

Certainly a drawing together of hearts is not the same thing as unity in faith, but it is a disposing factor thereto. Men, especially those who for long have lived as strangers to each other in an atmosphere of mistrust and animosity, and deeply rooted in their innermost being to a tradition four centuries old, are ill prepared to surrender themselves to arguments, however closely reasoned, which may be offered to them by those from whom they differ.

Did not the Council of Trent, before giving a definition of the justification of Christianity, say that to dispose men's hearts to its consideration they must prepare themselves to take heed to the word of God, “*Praeparate corda vestra Domino?*”

At the height of the rumours to which the Letter of the Archbishop had given rise, one of those who had been taking part in the conversations wrote: “It would be difficult for anyone not living in England to measure the importance the results just attained will assume in the opinion of the public. Even though the amount of immediate success is not very great, I think it will mark a distinct point of departure towards fresh progress, and

that we shall have the fullest cause to give thanks to God for it."

At the conclusion of each conference the members took leave of each other with a promise to pray, and also to obtain the prayers of others, for the success of this holy cause.

Pope Leo XIII (in his Encyclical *Divinum illud munus*), Pius XI (in his Encyclical *Ecclesiam Dei*) and Benedict XV, did not cease to hope on their side for the reconciliation of our separated brethren, and to pray for the realisation of a joint accord of all nations in oecumenical unity.

At the Secret Consistory of March 24th, 1924, the Holy Father again spoke with touching compassion of those strayed souls who were seeking out their difficult way to the truth. Certain newspapers thought they saw in the last lines of the following passage an open allusion to the attempts being made at Malines, and clear approval of the Cardinal's action.

"There are also a great number of men, desirous for truth and charity, and athirst for unity and peace, who are turning their gaze from heresy and schism towards Us and the Apostolic See, like sheep who are scattered astray, urged on by a longing for the Master's fold. We can hardly express how ardently We desire to embrace them, and if to the oft reiterated appeal of the supreme and sole Pastor, 'Come ye all to me,' they reply by hastening to Us, we will speak to them the words of a true Father, 'All I have is yours.' In this light We shall view with special favour all those Catholics, who, urged on by Divine grace, are endeavouring to aid their separated brethren to find the true faith by making level their road and dispelling inveterate prejudices, by showing them the whole Catholic doctrine and, above all, by manifesting in themselves that charity which is the mark of Christ's disciples."

The reasons for this attempt are clearly given in

the instruction by the Cardinal which lies in front of us.

“Not for the world would I give occasion to one of our separated brethren to say that he had knocked with confidence at the door of a Roman Bishop and that this Catholic Bishop had refused to open it.

“A great nation has been for over eight centuries our elder sister; she has given to the Church a phalanx of saints whom we still honour to this day in our liturgy; within the bosom of a vast empire she has kept a marvellous store of resources for innumerable missions, but she bears a wound in her side; we, who are Catholics, sustained by the grace of God in the whole truth, grieve over that criminal dismemberment which tore it away, four centuries ago, from our Mother, the Church; and there are Catholics who, after the example of the Priest and Levite of the old law reproved by our Divine Saviour in the parable of the Samaritan, would like to see a Catholic Bishop in proud indifference pass by on the other side of this sorely wounded man, refuse to pour one drop of oil into his gaping wound, or bind it up and seek to bring him to God’s Infirmary whither the Divine pity calls him!

“I should indeed judge myself to be blameworthy had I committed such a base act. Oh! I am well aware that those who differ from our action do not wish to misconstrue our charitable intentions, but they consider our intervention to be inopportune and inefficacious.

“Inopportune, because it would be better, in their opinion, to leave the separated Churches to go on to a complete breaking up, the contrast between error and truth thereby becoming more strongly accentuated, so that when they shall have arrived at their last gasp they may become alarmed at their evil plight, and then the hour for the triumph of truth will strike.

“Inefficacious, because, I suppose, I am not employ-

ing the apostolic method, that of individual conversions."

And the Cardinal proceeded to weigh up these two grievances. A faint-hearted policy is nowhere considered or approved in the Gospel. On the contrary, it says that one must not extinguish a light that is still smoking.

"How many believing Protestants fall into a state of liberalism in religious matters, how many victims of this become indifferent to all positive religion and end in irreligion, going on to swell the ranks of atheism, and soon afterwards of anarchism! This is a crying evil.

"Here we have sincere Christians, who feel themselves powerless to check this evil, appealing to an aid that will help them, and inviting others to concert with them in putting a check on irreligion. What minds can be so irreconcilable as to forbid this?

"Granted, some may say, but this is not the principal objective; the special aim should have been to exert a direct action on believing Christians, members of the High Church party, and by this means bring them back to the Church of Rome.

"How can anyone know the principal objective? One cannot classify in their order of importance the motives that should inspire them.

"We are considering the situation as a whole, wherein we see souls anxious both for themselves, and for the general community. We were confident in our belief that we might be able to render a service of spiritual aid to our brethren, and thereby discover another reason for discussion with them.

"Certain people are saying that our method of proceeding is maladroit, as experience has shown that we must give up exerting action on a collectivity of souls, and only aim at individuals.

"But how have we any right, we might reply, to place limits on the action of Divine compassion? Exert all

the influence you can on individuals, enlighten with your best efforts every soul that God places in your way—that is quite right, and no one would dream of blaming you for it.

“But what authority is there to exclude collectivities? This is exclusivism which is condemned.

“Listen to the mighty voice of Leo XIII, who, in his Apostolic Letter of April 14th, 1895, ‘*Amantissimae voluntatis*,’ was addressing not individuals, but the great mass of the English people, ‘*Ad Anglos*.’ Read over this Encyclical again; it is addressed to the nation, called by the Pope, ‘*Gens Anglorum illustris*.’ In his concluding words the Holy Pontiff deprecates the objections which pessimists might offer to his optimism: ‘Difficulties there are, I grant, but they are not of such a kind as to diminish in the smallest degree Our apostolic charity, nor to discourage your wills.’ Without doubt revolutions, and a separation several centuries old, have rooted disagreements deep in men’s hearts, but is this a reason for giving up all hope of reconciliation and peace? Certainly not.

“In order to measure the results which the future may hold out we must not base ourselves solely on human calculations; above all we should take into account the power and loving kindness of God.

“‘When we are face to face with a vast and difficult work,’ continues the Pope, ‘let us keep an upright intention and a generous heart, and God will then be with us; in triumphing over obstacles the beauty of the action of Divine Providence reveals itself in its most striking form.’”

“A year-and-a-half later—in September, 1896—the Pope found himself obliged to give the Anglicans a bitter disappointment by proclaiming the invalidity of their ordinations. Was he therefore going to abandon his far-reaching hopes and only envisage for the future a process of individual conversions? On the contrary,

he ended his Apostolic Letter, '*Apostolicae Curiae*,' by making a direct appeal to the Anglican clergy whom he had had the sorrow of grieving, conjuring them individually, and after them the mass of the people, to feel the inspiration of conversion.

" ' We shall not cease to labour as far as in Us lies for their reconciliation with the Church ; it is Our ardent desire that individuals and groups will then find powerful examples for their imitation.' "

" The fact is that even at this day, in spite of all the emphatic declarations that have been uttered on the intellectual progress of the masses, on the independence of their views and the sovereignty of their initiatives, they still follow ; they do not command, they obey. Even under a democracy the *régime* remains oligarchical. From the tribune of the demagogue on the one hand, and from that of the intellectual on the other, men dispute for the hegemony of the crowd, the former preaching violence and the stirring up of revolution, the latter seeking to safeguard order and discipline.

" If therefore it is within the plan of Divine Providence that our brethren, separated from us since the days of Luther, Henry VIII, and Queen Elizabeth, should re-enter one day the pale of the Church, it belongs to those who are enlightened to open ways of access to the returning movement. When the authorities of moral doctrine, who are respected by all, begin to entertain a more serene conception of the relations desired by Christ to exist between the faithful, the Episcopate and the Papacy, a great step forward will have been made in the direction of Catholic unity.

" In a work resulting in the salvation of souls, the essential factor consists in neither human prudence nor in the sagacity of tacticians, but in true evangelic simplicity, faith in the Divine loving-kindness, and the all-powerful effect of grace which will supply the deficiency in the means employed when the need arises.

“ This ardent faith is the beginning, the middle, and the end of every apostolic effort.

“ It alone is capable of upholding the constancy of the missionary ; it alone will ensure his reward whatever may betide.”

“ In the domain of the supernatural, St. Paul says, ‘ *Neque volentis, neque currentis, sed miserentis est Dei.*’

“ You may plant and water your plantations in vain ; only One has power to give growth to these organisms, and that is God.

“ Success may possibly be slow in coming ; it matters not ; an effort of charity is never lost.

“ The labourer casts his seed into the furrows he has laboriously hollowed, then he leaves the frosts of winter to pass over them, and waits for the coming sun in spring, and the summer heat, and it is only after this long waiting, made up of alternating hopes and fears, that he finally has the joy of reaping his harvest and laying up his crop in his barn,” and the Cardinal adds : “ We too, the reapers of souls—Christ has forewarned us—have to sow our seed under the sweat of our brow, and, more often than not, with our tears, before the hour of harvesting sounds ; and when that blessed hour shall strike another will, in all probability, have taken our place.”

Death came too soon to take away the sower. Another will take his place. A few days before leaving for the hospital, when a surgical operation was to be attempted, the Cardinal wrote a letter to the Pope in which he begged, in the event of his death, to allow the work to be continued which had been so happily begun. If he had had the time to carry it through he would have been the artificer of the greatest event in the religious history of the world since the Reformation.

The meetings at Malines were to be held, for the fifth time, beginning on the 24th January.

Let me now leave it to Abbé Portal to relate the last hastily arranged conversation at the Hospital of St. Elizabeth in Brussels, which is taken from the issue of the Paris newspaper, *La Croix*, of the 2nd February, 1926 :

“During the Malines Conversations there developed relations of very great confidence and of genuine friendship between Cardinal Mercier and Lord Halifax. I was fortunate in being a witness of this on many occasions. But the last interviews, which took place on January 21st, two days before his death, revealed his feelings in a most touching manner.

“I had arrived at Brussels on Tuesday, the 19th. The Cardinal wished to receive me on that day as soon as he learned of my presence at the Infirmary. The venerable invalid spoke to me of the Conversations and of their continuance in the event of his own death. He told me what he had done in connection with them before his operation, when he was setting his affairs in final order, and he gave me his advice. His serenity was wonderful, and he expressed himself with perfect clearness and lucidity. I told him that Lord Halifax was due to arrive on the following evening.

““Oh !” he said, ‘that is too good of him at his age—eighty-six years—and for such a cause !’

“On Wednesday His Eminence sent word to me that if Lord Halifax wished to attend the Mass which was being celebrated in his bedroom he could come about seven o'clock the next morning. The offer was accepted with most eager gratitude. The Mass was celebrated by Canon Dessain, the Archbishop's secretary. Those present were Fr. Hubert, two sisters of the Infirmary, the Abbé Van den Hout, Lord Halifax, and myself. The Cardinal received Holy Communion for the last time. With what intention did he receive it? It is easy to guess. After the Mass we bowed

silently to the Cardinal before retiring, and then suddenly he opened his arms wide towards Lord Halifax and they embraced each other for a long time.

Towards ten o'clock the Cardinal received us for the first time. Our interview lasted some time, and, naturally, we discussed the Malines Conversations. Half-an-hour later we had a second interview, during which he returned to several questions which had been raised at the first interview. Finally His Eminence asked us to come back once more before we parted. Towards the end of this last interview the Cardinal made a gesture of infinite grace. He took his pastoral ring from his finger and said to Lord Halifax :

“ ‘ You see this ring : it is engraved with the names of St. Desiré and St. Joseph, my patron saints, and St. Rombaut, the patron saint of our cathedral. It was given to me by my family when I was appointed a bishop. I have always worn it, though I have several others. Well, if I am to die, I ask you to accept it as a gift. . . . ’ The emotion of Lord Halifax was so great that he was unable to reply, but he made a gesture of protest.

“ Abbé Portal stayed his gesture saying : ‘ Yes, yes . . . it is for you and Edward¹ . . . ’

“ We were all overcome with emotion. His own wonderful serenity was undisturbed. He blessed Lord Halifax and his family. He blessed me, and added : ‘ Remember me to our friends in Paris, to Mgr. Batifol, to the Abbé Hemmer, and to your own Superior-General.’

“ I was about to leave the room when the Cardinal said to me : ‘ And James ’ (Lord Halifax’s valet, who goes everywhere with him), ‘ where is James ? ’ ‘ He is at the hotel, getting the luggage ready.’ ‘ Oh, I would have been so glad to see him.’ ‘ I will fetch him, Your Eminence,’ I answered. And I went to

¹ Lord Halifax’s son, the present Viceroy of India.

bring James, who then came to receive the Cardinal's last blessing.

"At one-thirty p.m. Lord Halifax started on his journey back to England, and I returned to Paris at the end of the day."

"It was indeed a blessing," wrote Lord Halifax recently, "to have seen and been brought into contact with such a personality, such a life, and to have been taught the lesson of what constitutes the real strength and value of human life here below, what can alone give real and permanent success to all human effort."

The bringing about of the "Conversations" to forward the union of the Churches will remain as one of his finest claims to honour and glory.

Doubtless we should not abandon ourselves to any easy-going optimism, but on the other hand Catholics attach a capital importance to questions of doctrine. Anglicans only see in them a matter of opinion of quite secondary importance, the principal of certitude having been seriously shaken by Protestantism.

The modernising tendencies of these minds saturated by varied opinions, the prejudices of centuries, a national misplaced pride binding England to Anglicanism, and the problem of their ordinations and of the celibacy of the clergy, are clearly serious obstacles.

But this attempt marks enormous progress. It was not so long ago—in 1850—since England was completely carried away by what she termed an "intolerable aggression" at the time of the re-establishment of the Hierarchy by Pius IX. We hesitate to recall in what terms the Lord Chancellor spoke of it at a Mansion House dinner at the time. "We will trample under foot your Cardinal's Hat in spite of the Pope and all his Prelates."

These sentiments will enable us to judge of the progress that has already been accomplished.

CHAPTER II

CLOSING DAYS. HIS DEATH AND FUNERAL.

His later activities. His illness and removal to the Hospital of St. Elisabeth in Brussels. Last days. The Cardinal dictates a long letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury the day before his death. The end. Belgian grief. Removal of the Cardinal's body to Malines. The public funeral at Sainte Gudule in Brussels. Interment at the Cathedral of Saint Rombaut in Malines.

THE Cardinal's activity was truly prodigious. Of him it could well be said : "*Nihil humanum a me alienum puto.*"

Shepherd of a flock of two-and-a-half million souls, divided up into the Flemish and Walloon population, he also had under his charge a body of clergy amounting to over two thousand priests. This would have been sufficient to more than occupy the activity of a Bishop with the heart of an apostle. Nevertheless, these cares never stood in the way of his keeping his attention alert on the spiritual, moral, intellectual and material needs of his following, his fellow countrymen and the Catholics of the whole world. Through his unceasing activity, works connected with the Church were multiplied, organised, and assimilated ; from being, as it were, but scattered dust before his advent they became a solid block which was able to resist the gusts of misunder-

standing. It would be a great mistake to judge of him as only confining himself to pure speculative thought. It is true he moved in this realm with a facility which aroused the admiration of scholars, but no one was more practical than he when it was a question of drawing the best possible results from it when the conditions were duly proposed.

But—and there is no contradiction in this—he was a man of God, and as such had that faith which moves mountains. If any undertaking for the salvation of souls seemed to be required, or any progressive advance necessitated, financial arguments did not exist for him; he threw himself eagerly into the enterprise.

However varied and fruitful his efforts might appear in the eyes of the impartial observer, they were not scattered disconnectedly. To diffuse supernatural life and the reign of the Kingdom of God formed the Ariadne thread guiding his actions; this is well shown in the five volumes of his *Pastoral Letters*. In spite of his age he never refrained from promising his presence at any function. It was solicited on every side, and it was hardly in him to decline invitations, knowing well the disappointment that a refusal, however legitimate, would cause. Right up to the last weeks of his life he never allowed anything to interfere with his attending anywhere where he thought his presence would be of help.

In 1923 he presided at Wavre over the congress of *la Jeunesse Catholique Belge*, of which he was the founder. Under a torrential downpour, while groups of people were defiling down the streets of Charleroi in 1925, he bore up against the storm which put to flight the pilgrims to Notre Dame du Rempart, just as he withstood the advice of some well-wishers not to be present at this procession which they said might lead to counter-manifestations and brawls. "I have given my word, and am not afraid to go down into the street to keep it," he answered with a smile.

In the month of November, 1925, his private secretary, Canon Dessain, who was particularly familiar with his whole career, told me that the Cardinal had accepted an invitation to be present at the fiftieth anniversary of the Institut Catholique de Paris, being unwilling to disappoint the organisers of a great celebration designed to do honour to higher Catholic teaching, which had been the dominating concern of his whole life. This journey to France was the last he made abroad, whither he had so often travelled, especially on the occasions of Eucharistic Congresses or meetings of learned men, at which he had made fluent addresses in many languages. He felt himself unable to refuse the wish which so many had to hear him speak, and so there are very many who cherish the memory of his simple and spontaneous eloquence which found a way to their hearts from the very fact that it came straight from his own.

Did the Cardinal have a presentiment of his approaching end? God alone knows this. Possibly he still preserved some hope but, like a wise man, he used the time left to him as if it were soon to be taken from him. He said goodbye to his seminarists on Saturday the 26th December, 1925, three days before his operation. Filled with keen emotion they were all assembled together when the Cardinal made his entry.

Quite simply he commended himself to their prayers, but asked them to retain all their self-possession. "Personally," he told them, "I have absolute confidence in the doctors who are going to operate on me." He spoke to them also of his confidence in God to Whose will he abandoned himself entirely. He gave them his paternal benediction and ended with these words: "I do not say *adieu*, but *au revoir*!"

Then he went to revisit the familiar country scenes of his childhood and to kneel before the graves of his relatives which he had tended with special care—that of his parents and brother at Braine, and those of his

three sisters who had been nuns, at Haut-Ittré and Virginal.

When his doctor let him know that an operation was necessary, the little that was human in him rose in revolt. An emotion that was plainly visible overcame him, but this lasted only for a few seconds. Shortly he regained complete serenity and said: "In God's good keeping."

During the last days of December, 1925, he went to the Hospital of St. Elisabeth in Brussels, and on the 29th placed himself in the hands of the surgeons who endeavoured to arrest the disease. But the patient was in too grave a condition and this proved of no avail. There was nothing to be done against the cancer in the stomach which the doctors discovered. They had no hope whatsoever, but they were anxious to do everything possible to save him. The feelings of emotion aroused in the public had to be spared and so they concealed by a pious subterfuge the cruel reality; the first *bulletins* breathed confidence while hinting at the possibility of complications always to be taken into consideration, and more especially to be feared in the case of an old man.

With the same habitual mastery over himself with which he had faced the intervention of his doctors, he received the news of its unavailing result and their view of his alarming condition.

A slow and tranquil struggle with death was to ensue before his soul took its flight to the beatitude he had taught and meditated over throughout his beautiful life. On the 6th January, 1926, the day on which the King visited him for the last time, he asked to receive the last sacraments, which were administered to him by his Vicar-General in the presence of the old servant who had tended him since the days of his professorship at Louvain. After that he gradually became weaker; only light nourishment was allowed him, and soon he was

unable to take even that. Nevertheless he preserved all his serenity. To his visitors—Ambassadors, Ministers, Prelates and relations—he gave proofs of great clearness of mind, and a perfect “submission to the will of God,” as he said. No one could hold back their tears, while the one who was patiently awaiting death was the least moved of them all. He preserved entire possession of his mind, and made an effort to keep the tranquil smile on his lips which had always been their charm, as the following incident will show :

The Queen, who was at his bedside, gently remonstrated with him at his neglect to take any precautions. But he informed Her Majesty that he was under no illusion as to his real condition, and accepted his fate with courage and resignation. Whereupon the Queen said :

“ You have no right to say that, Eminence ; you well know that the shining light you radiate is indispensable to us.”

“ Far less than Your Majesty’s gracious smile ! ” replied the Cardinal.

The days followed on ; no complaint, not even in moments of crisis, fell from his lips ; only the murmur of trustful invocations. From time to time he rallied his forces, and conversed with his auxiliaries in the administration of his diocese, giving his final instructions to all.

Five days before his death, in spite of his extreme weakness, the Cardinal drew up the following letter in which he gave to his priests his last recommendations :

“ MY VERY DEAR BROTHERS IN THE PRIESTHOOD,

“ During the hours of recollection in which I have been seeing all human hope fade away, and my soul has remained alone with God, my thoughts have been turning ever closer and closer to you, and I have been living with you in uninterrupted spiritual communion.

“ It was your Priesthood that I envisaged. Deprived

of the happiness of celebrating the holy sacrifice of the Mass, I have been associating myself throughout the day with the Mass that our Sovereign Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, is offering up every second on all the altars of this terrestrial globe through the instrumentality of His ministers. The Mass assumed in my eyes a character of exceptionally striking reality because the sacrifice of Calvary, which it commemorates, appeared to me in a tangible aspect, in which it was given to me to associate myself more actively and more directly than usual.

“And so I said to myself that I must make you have a share in this grace which God was granting to me, by asking you, in these which are perhaps the last hours of my life, to always celebrate the Holy Liturgy of the Mass as though you were on Calvary, bringing to it all the fervour of faith and devotion of which you are capable.

“The celebration of Mass is the act *par excellence* of each day, and should be the central act, and you should every day renew in yourselves the counsel given to us by Pope Urban VIII which on more than one occasion I have felt it my duty to recall to your minds: *Si quid est in rebus humanis plane divinum quod nobis superni cives (si in eos invidia caderet) invidere passent, id certe est sacrosanctum Missae Sacrificium, cujus beneficio ut homines quadam anticipatione possideant in terris coelum, dum ante oculos habent, et manibus contrectant ipsum coeli terraeque Conditorem.*

“My very dear Friends, I think I have freed my conscience in leaving you this final exhortation. You became priests in order to celebrate the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

“To live your Priesthood means before anything else to celebrate Mass in a holy manner, and in a like manner administer the Sacraments connected with it.

“It also means remaining united to your Bishop and,

through him, to the Vicar of Christ and to Christ Himself, in order to co-operate in the work of glorifying the most holy Trinity and the redemption of the world”

The little white room where a great life was ending became the world's centre. In palace and humble cottage people discussed the great event which was holding the world in grief. In cloister, parishes, colleges and homes, Heaven was being taken with violence—a miracle must happen! Intercession was made through the little Sister Therèse of the Child Jesus. Monks and nuns offered their lives to save the life of the one who was disappearing, whom the world so greatly needed. “Lord, save us, we perish,” the cry uttered of old by the apostles, came back on the lips of men and women of to-day. Representatives of the Heads of foreign States, and Ministers came unceasingly one after the other to the Hospital, and telegraphed the news to their anxious people.

Among those who were privileged to be received by Cardinal Mercier during his last days was Monsieur Iswolsky, the former Procurator of the Holy Synod in Moscow. Formerly a free-thinker, he is now one of the most earnest followers of the Russian Church, and fulfils the functions of Chaplain to the Orthodox Russians who perform in a pious and edifying manner their religious duties in their little church in Brussels.

The former Procurator saw with the utmost grief the approaching end of the Cardinal who had done so much for the Russian colony, and this grief was shared in no less degree by all the Orthodox Russians in Brussels. In this connection he relates a moving incident :

“The Orthodox Russians, as is well-known, when they desire the priest to pray for one of their intentions during the Mass, on entering the church buy a morsel of bread which they convey to the celebrant with a note on which is inscribed their intention. The celebrant

breaks off a small fragment of this bread and lays it on the paten before the consecration.

“Now, on several days when celebrating Mass it happened that the former Procurator of the Holy Synod frequently received the little morsels of bread accompanied by notes bearing the name ‘Métropolitte Joseph,’ by which the Orthodox Russians called the Cardinal.”

The Cardinal made a very great effort to receive Lord Halifax, President of the English Church Union, and the Abbé Portal who took part in the Malines Conversations, but on the Thursday evening his condition was extremely grave. He was unable to receive the Belgian Ministers when they came to visit him. Even his family were not admitted to his bedside, and the visit of the Crown Prince Leopold, which he had himself requested, had to be deferred. The latter took place during the morning of the Friday, and how touching was this meeting at such a time of master and pupil, for the Prince had been initiated into the philosophy of St. Thomas at the weekly lectures on philosophy given at the Archbishop's Palace at Malines.

The Prince, who had just returned from a long journey in the Colonies, had barely landed, and hastened to the Cardinal to bid farewell to the master who had introduced to him the shining *arcana* of Thomist wisdom, and the Cardinal's dying eyes and gentle hand as he blessed him were able to rest one last time on the young head on which were placed the future destinies of his country and State. Cardinal Mercier had upheld the country, the State, and Kingdom against revolutionaries and foreign invaders. These past trials were now liquidated in a close union of the national spirit, the Catholic clergy, and Royalty, and, as the worthy and crowning honour of this great heart, the Prince of the Church, gave his final, or almost final prayers for the living symbol of the future development of his earthly family.

On the Friday evening the death agony began. The illustrious patient was perfectly aware of his condition, and poured forth encouragement on those around him.

Among the most moving hours of the last days of the Cardinal's life there will remain on record those passed by the illustrious Primate in drawing up a last letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the day before his death.

He felt that his end was very near; he was rapidly becoming weaker, and his thoughts crystallised at that moment on the great work he had taken in hand in the course of the Malines Conversations with the representatives of the Anglican Church—the reunion of the Churches which had been separated by schism for several centuries.

He asked his secretary to take up his pen and write a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, which he dictated. What was it he wrote from his death-bed? It is a mystery which the historians of the future may one day, perhaps, be able to clear up; but it now remains a hidden secret of private correspondence.

It was a long letter. The mental strain which its composition entailed on the dying Cardinal was too much for him. When it was finished he took up the sheets, read them over slowly and punctuated his views by a few corrections. Then he reflected for a long time. He wished to complete the letter by a final paragraph, to finish it off, most probably, with a conclusion in which he would sum up his views; his extreme fatigue, added to his great weakness, hindered the words and phrases from coming as he would have wished. At this moment of mental tension he underwent a seizure. When his attendants had restored him he again took up the letter, finished it and declared himself satisfied, and that they might despatch it. But those present noticed a little streak of blood fringing the lips of the dying man. He had just put forth the supreme mental effort of which his poor emaciated body was still capable.

A little while afterwards he said : " And now there is nothing more to be done but to wait." He was ready to appear before God.

The doctors issued the following *bulletin* : " His condition becomes graver every hour. A fatal issue cannot long be delayed." The inhaling of oxygen, and the hypodermic syringe, eased his breathing and prolonged for a few hours his ebbing life.

On the Friday afternoon the illustrious patient had asked :

" Is it Thursday or Friday ? "

" Friday," they replied.

" And what time is it ? " the Cardinal again asked.

" It is three o'clock."

" Then it is time for the prayers for the dying to be recited."

He requested those around him to bring to his bedside the Apostolic Nuncio, his director, the members of his family and his faithful servants.

In their presence the Cardinal followed the prayers from a prayer book throughout the recitation, turning the pages over himself.

After the prayers, the Cardinal gave the Episcopal Benediction, making the three signs of the Cross ; at the second sign his hand fell back, but notwithstanding, he was able to make the sign of the Cross for the third time.

He then thanked those who had been present : " Thank you, thank you," he said.

These were almost his last words.

The night passed peacefully, but the following morning his condition became worse ; pneumonia was gaining the upper hand.

On Saturday morning at 7 o'clock Abbé Joseph Mercier celebrated Holy Mass at the foot of His Eminence's bed as he was peaceably fading away ; his brother, Monsieur Charles Mercier, served the Mass. Those present were Madame Mercier, the Cardinal's

sister-in-law, Canon Dessain, the much loved Brother Hubert and Doctor Van Hee, who had ministered to His Eminence with wonderful devotion and tenderness. Doctor Van Hee had been watching over him day and night in an adjoining room. Sister Caroline and the Mother Superior were also present; they had practically not left the illustrious patient since his arrival at the hospital. By a providential coincidence Abbé Mercier was able to celebrate the Mass of Marie Médiatrice which had been instituted on the initiative and earnest petition of his Eminence.

He was in the extremity of weakness, and his eyes remained closed for the greater part of the time, but he was in entire possession of his faculties, and followed the Mass which was said very distinctly; he made the signs of the Cross with the celebrant, and these motions, and the *meâ culpâ* at the *Confiteor* and *Agnus Dei* were profoundly moving. All present were weeping.

At the end of Mass, when Abbé Mercier blessed his august uncle, who was also his god-father, the Cardinal gazed at him fixedly and then slowly made the sign of the Cross.

As they went out the Cardinal with a smile recognised each one, and thanking them with his eyes and inclination of the head he made a gesture of *au revoir* with his right hand.

His Eminence did not receive Holy Communion, neither had he on the previous day. The last time he had received had been on Thursday, the 21st January, when Holy Communion had been given to him in the presence of Lord Halifax.

It was nearly 8 o'clock, and the Doctors were of opinion that his Eminence could not last out for more than a few hours. Then arrived the Apostolic Nuncio, the Vicars Generals, and his confessor, Père Van den Steen, the Redemptorist. They recited prayers. The Cardinal, who retained his entire self-possession, made

the accompanying signs of the Cross and bowed his head. Mgr. Legraive and Père Van de Steen read by turns the wonderful prayers which our Holy Mother, the Church, reserves for the last moments of a Christian soul, and how full of unction did they sound when recited for this eminent man on his death-bed!

"Eminence, we will say the *Te Deum* in thanks to God for all the graces He has given to you."

The Cardinal made an inclination of assent with his head and the verses of this Psalm of thanksgiving slowly rolled forth.

A few more members of his household came in—Virginie, the devoted servant who had waited on His Eminence for thirty-three years; Frans, his valet, who had accompanied him everywhere during the twenty years of his Episcopate; Oswald, his secretary; and the chauffeur. Everyone had tears in his eyes.

"*Magnificat*," His Eminence pronounced distinctly. This was recited, also the *De Profundis*, and at the verse: *Si iniquitates observaveris Domine . . .* the Cardinal lifted his arm, as much as to say: "Ah! Yes, indeed."

They kept on reciting prayers—the *Miserere*, Psalms, and touching and beautiful invocations. The Cardinal made a sign to break off. "Go away and rest," he said.

The little room was full of people and the atmosphere was almost unbreathable, and it had to be cleared two or three times so as to freshen the air.

His Excellency the Nuncio slowly repeated the prayers of the Apostolic Benediction as the morning went on. Père Van den Steen recited the pious offerings: "Offer your life, Eminence, for your Archdiocese, for the Church, for our country." The Nuncio spoke a few words into the Father's ear. "Offer your life, Eminence, for the union of the Churches, of all the Christian Churches in the one, true Christ." The Cardinal made a sign of "Yes," and we saw the tears glistening in the

eyes of Dom Baudouin who was kneeling on the other side of the bed. "Offer your life, Eminence, for the Sovereign Pontiff" . . . always with an approving gesture from the dying Cardinal.

His breathing, though very feeble, was regular. Sister Caroline, who was kneeling beside His Eminence, made him inhale oxygen from time to time, and wiped his forehead. Death would come gently.

At a quarter-past twelve Baron Rolin Jacquemyns arrived. He was brought into the room, and knelt by the side of the bed. His Eminence opened his eyes, fixed them on him, recognised him and then grasped his hand, murmuring his thanks and gave him his blessing. The Minister kissed the Cardinal's hand and made preparations to leave, but a gesture from the dying man called him back. The Cardinal thanked him again and made a sign of *au revoir*. Baron Rolin went out, hardly able to restrain his profound emotion.

At a quarter to one Abbé Mercier slowly recited the *Credo*, at the conclusion of which the Cardinal made a broad sign of the Cross. His long hand, seeming even longer at the end of his wrist which was nothing more than bone covered over with skin, rose in a majestic manner. The last signs of the Cross that he made were as solemn and beautiful as those he always gave when officiating pontifically.

Frequently during the morning, and more rarely in the afternoon, his Eminence devoutly kissed his large brass crucifix, on the feet, the heart and the head.

His head began to sink lower and the breathing became more feeble. At two p.m. the room was again cleared to air it. A few minutes later they returned; His Eminence was sinking visibly. From time to time Mgr. Van Cauwenbergh, on his knees at the head of the bed, recited Latin invocations which were in wonderful keeping. The dying man took Brother Hubert's hand, which he held until his last breath.



Photopress

THE KING OF THE BELGIANS, MARSHAL FOCH AND PRINCE LEOPOLD

On the other side of the bed the Mother Superior held the Cardinal's left hand pressed over a blessed candle, while Sister Caroline applied the oxygen inhaler and moistened his lips from time to time.

The Cardinal's head sank still lower. Feeling his pulse the doctor made a sign that it was hardly beating.

Everyone prayed and wept; the silence between the prayers was impressive and nothing but the very slight rattle from the throat of His Eminence could be heard. Abbé Mercier gave him the crucifix to kiss and then laid it on his heart. His eyes were open and his breathing was growing feebler.

Everyone wept silently, and a terrible silence it was that held sobs and breath in restraint. There were a few slight nervous starts. The breathing became irregular. It was a quarter to three. The impression arose that by three o'clock—the hour when our Saviour died—Cardinal Mercier would be in Paradise.

The breathing stopped, but the end had not yet come, and one more breath was taken. But at three o'clock exactly it was really the end, after a final, scarcely perceptible sigh. Those present drew a long breath. There was no further sign of life. The doctor examined his eyes and made a sign that all was over. Mgr. Legraive recited the Liturgical prayers and ended with a first *requiescat in pace*, which tore all hearts. The sobs which had been held in restraint broke forth and everyone wept profusely.

His Excellency, the Nuncio, then closed the eyes of the Prince of the Church. Everyone kissed his hand that was still warm and the Cardinal's pastoral ring. Outside, the crowd were waiting.

Those were unforgettable hours for those who received the signal favour to live through them. The dominant impression from that wonderful spectacle was that of a saint living in faith and hope up to the very last limit, and entering straightway into beatitude.

The professions of faith, confidence, hope and love made by him during the last days of his life, and especially on that last day, were wonderful. For those who were present during the Cardinal's last hours, and praying with him till the beginning of the afternoon—up till when he had most certainly retained full consciousness—they will remain a sublime and supernatural lesson. His last spoken words at about mid-day, an *au revoir*, were for all those present who were just leaving his room for a few minutes.

What a marvel is the death of a saint, but what an immense void ! “ From to-morrow onwards I shall pray to him as to a saint,” said Dom Baudouin.

The Cardinal lay vested once again in his sacerdotal robes, with his white mitre on his head. The features were much changed, and the hollows of his eyes and his cheeks had fallen in ; his illness had produced ravages which death had accentuated, but the expression of his face remained firm in its exceeding serenity.

It would have required a miracle if he had recovered, and heaven had been assailed with prayers for him. So dreaded and yet so expected was the imminence of a fatal ending, for the incurable disease which had struck down the Cardinal permitted the indulgence of no hope. His death filled the world with sorrowful stupefaction.

Belgium bewailed the loss of a great citizen, the Church a great Bishop, and the whole world felt all at once that it had been deprived of one of the most solid pillars of King and country. He had adorned his own country by his personal *prestige*, giving the proud countersign of fidelity in face of the enemy, just as when confronted by disorder and error he had preached submission to the eternal laws which make a people strong. At the bidding of the Pilot in Rome he had launched the barque of the new Thomism when the tempest was at its height and he had been able to take it safely to

the shores of science; an apostle by his pen, in speech, and action, he showed what a disciple of Jesus consumed by love might be, and considered that a man has not given sufficiently of himself if he has not given all. The faithful interpreter of the mind of the Sovereign Pontiffs, he was also their guide and counsellor.

All these great qualities were of such an exceptional order that they soon drew upon him the notice of the whole world. Who was not touched by that simplicity, goodness and grace—the triple crown forming his greatness? Lowly and great, ignorant and wise alike, were conscious of that radiation from his intense interior life.

Death will not silence his voice, nor efface his image; a pure splendour, exempt from the contingencies of chance, is already rising from his tomb. Happy are they who lived in this growing light!

He placed the seal of his greatness on the many manifestations of his activity, and over-topped the bulk of his contemporaries. He had the intuitions of genius and was able to impose them on others by a surprising force of will. His authority was uncontested. Future history will proclaim him as the grandest figure of our day, and one of the most heroic of all times. And who knows what the Church will say of him one day?

To the great Cardinal whose purple mantle sheltered their Fatherland in the days of her adversity, to the Patriot who incarnated Belgium, to the Defender of the City, to the man whom men of former days would have called the Father of his Country, to that voice speaking in the name of the universal conscience, the Belgian capital gave royal honours. Vast multitudes hastened to salute the great Belgian as he lay in his coffin, the national hero, and perhaps, in obedience to some mysterious instinct, and above all, the Archbishop who was a saint.

In the imposing homage paid by this innumerable

host who came from all parts, there was veneration and gratitude, admiration and love.

It was truly right and proper that the majesty of his funeral rites, enhanced by the presence of the King, the Government, and all the public bodies, should be on a scale consistent with the greatness of one who is the purest glory of Belgian history, and one of the grandest figures in any age or country.

On the evening of the fatal issue the Cardinal's remains, before which defiled more than a hundred thousand people during the four days on which they were on public view, were brought back to the Archiepiscopal Palace at Malines.

The saddest of all the ceremonies closed the day, and he was placed in his coffin in the strictest privacy.

It required eight men to take the coffin to the great *salon*. It consisted of a two-fold casing of lead and oak, the former being lined with red velvet. The outside of the coffin was fastened down by twenty-four large bolts and a mahogany cross showed its dark outlines on the upper part. A copper plate, screwed to the foot of the coffin, bore the following inscription :

“ Désiré Joseph, Cardinal Mercier, XVI^e Archevêque de Malines, Obiit, 23 Janv. 1926 (MCMXXVI), dans la 75^e année de son âge, la 52^e de son sacerdoce et la 20^e de son règne comme Primat de Belgique. R.I.P.”

The unusual length of the coffin recalled the lofty and noble stature of the Cardinal. His body was enclosed resting on the shabby mattress of the iron bedstead in the bare bedroom he had occupied in the Palace. At the request of the Chapter the sculptor, Pierre de Soete, came to take a mask of his face.

How poignant was the emotion felt by those present when one by one they kissed his pastoral ring, and the Sisters cut off a few locks of his hair with trembling hands !

Nothing in the mourning town of Malines gave any indication of the imposing pomp which soon was to surround the national funeral honours to be offered to him in Brussels. There was only a feeling of desolating consternation, betrayed by an absolute silence, which more than anything else gave evidence of immense sorrow. Great sorrows, suffered in silence, have no need of any exterior indications.

In small groups the inhabitants took their stand on the pavements past which the funeral procession was shortly to proceed, while the children from the schools came up to line the way. Once more the Cardinal was to pass before those little ones whom he so greatly loved, and who had so often hailed him with joy or knelt to receive his paternal smile and blessing. To-day they will see him pass by amid their sobs, resting in his coffin.

The procession was formed outside the Palace at eight-thirty and started accompanied by the singularly impressive strains of Chopin's March, followed by the March of Franciscus which the famous bell-ringer, Jef Denyn, rang out from the bells of the lofty tower.

In front of the hearse were borne by three professors and a pupil from the Grand Séminaire, the Cardinal's Hat, which had been given to him by the Pope, his armorial bearings, and two velvet cushions on which were pinned the principal orders and decorations which had been bestowed on him—notably the great riband of the Order of Leopold, of the Legion of Honour and the French Croix de Guerre.

The *cappa magna* of brilliant purple covered the coffin. Immediately behind the hearse followed the Mother Superior of the hospital where the much venerated Prelate had died; the Nursing Sisters who had ministered to him, and had laid out his body for the coffin; Brother Hubert, and the faithful Francis, the Cardinal's servant for so many years.

At the railway station the coffin was placed in a mor-

tuary carriage and all the ecclesiastical and civil authorities took their places in the train. Inside the station, as well as along the streets of Malines, the lamps had been lighted and veiled in *crêpe*. This had been done all along the route.

At 9.25 the train moved out. It had to go fairly fast in order to reach Brussels by ten, for at every station it slowed down as a tribute to the waiting crowds of clergy, schools, Catholic and patriotic associations as they stood with their banners lowered in salute, and made the sign of the Cross and prayed. Everywhere in the fields as the train passed by could be witnessed the biblical scene of peasants kneeling with their arms crossed, beginning at the convent of Marie de Coloma, just outside Malines, and this scene was repeated all the way as far as the House of the Holy Family at Helmet.

In Brussels preparations had been proceeding all through the night. In that city were to take place impressive and pathetic funeral ceremonies such as had been expected for this Prince of the Church. The entire nation had determined to render him magnificent homage; the day before, through the mouthpiece of their representatives in Parliament, and to-day by the fervent participation of the whole population, they were associated together in a tribute of veneration for his great memory. And this unanimity of feeling was not to be wondered at, for the loss sustained by Belgium had been felt as deeply throughout the whole world, and for the past four days the most eloquent and significant expressions of the sorrow that had overtaken every clime and latitude had marked the announcement of the Cardinal's death.

From a very early hour on this misty winter morning, the still melancholy of which was so much in keeping with the sorrow in all hearts, a great multitude had been wending their way to the streets through which the procession was to pass, recollected and fully conscious of

the extent of the catastrophe which had overtaken the nation. Nothing more moving or more significant could be imagined than this huge concourse of people of every class of society united in the same sentiment of veneration and regret. An air of mourning was on every countenance and this was shown in the attitude of the crowds massed behind the barriers, on the balconies and at the windows, where draped flags, black hangings, and *crêpe* veils lent a funereal note to the whole scene.

All the troops in Brussels were mobilised. From the Gare du Nord to the University Buildings, along by the tomb of the Unknown Soldier—that other mighty dead—two ranks of infantry lined the route with fixed bayonets in accordance with the honours prescribed by the Protocol to be rendered to the Head of the Episcopate, whose red *soutane* on official occasions bore the decoration of the Grand Cordon of the Order of Leopold.

The colonnade in the railway station had been transformed into a sumptuous *chapelle ardente* hung with black draperies embroidered in silver. At the end, in front of a temporary resting place, was a very simple altar on which stood a silver crucifix before which stood lighted candles. To the left was the *salon d'honneur*, likewise hung in black, for the reception of the Cardinals and Bishops.

The central hall of the station was not specially decorated; along it was laid a red carpet extending to the principal platform. Intense animation reigned there. The Academic Staff of the University of Louvain preceded by their two mace-bearers and the silken banners of the Catholic students, knotted with *crêpe*, had taken up their position at nine o'clock.

There too had arrived delegations representing the army, the district counsellors, the Governors of Provinces, Ministers Plenipotentiary, Ministers of State, Lieutenants-General with their sword hilts knotted with *crêpe*, forming a variegated assembly of uniforms and

black robes, into the midst of which that of Monsieur Van Iseghem, President of the Court of Cassation, introduced a patch of scarlet. Deputies and Senators of the three parties—Catholic, Liberal and Socialist—were also there in great numbers to take their part in the homage of the nation.

While officials of the Ministry of the Interior were arranging the members of the official world in their proper order a still more impressive spectacle was taking place in the *salon d'honneur* reserved for Prelates. Beneath the central lustre veiled in black, was an imposing array of ecclesiastical robes, red and purple. There were assembled Cardinal Bourne, Archbishop of Westminster; and Cardinal Dubois, Archbishop of Paris, with their Marshals in attendance; Mgr. Baudrilart of the French Academy and Rector of the Catholic Institute of Paris; Mgr. Sprankling representing Bishop Amigo, Bishop of Southwark; Mgr. Chollet, Archbishop of Cambrai; Mgr. Ginisty, Bishop of Verdun; Mgr. Lecomte, Bishop of Amiens; Mgr. Julien, Bishop of Arras, member of the Institut de France; Mgr. Heylen, Bishop of Namur; Mgr. Waffelaert, Bishop of Bruges; Mgr. Rasneur, Bishop of Tournai, the Abbot of the Canons Regular of the Lateran, representing the Chapter of the Church of Saint-Pierre-es-Liens, the titular church of the deceased Cardinal; Mgr. Nommesch, Bishop of Luxembourg, and many others.

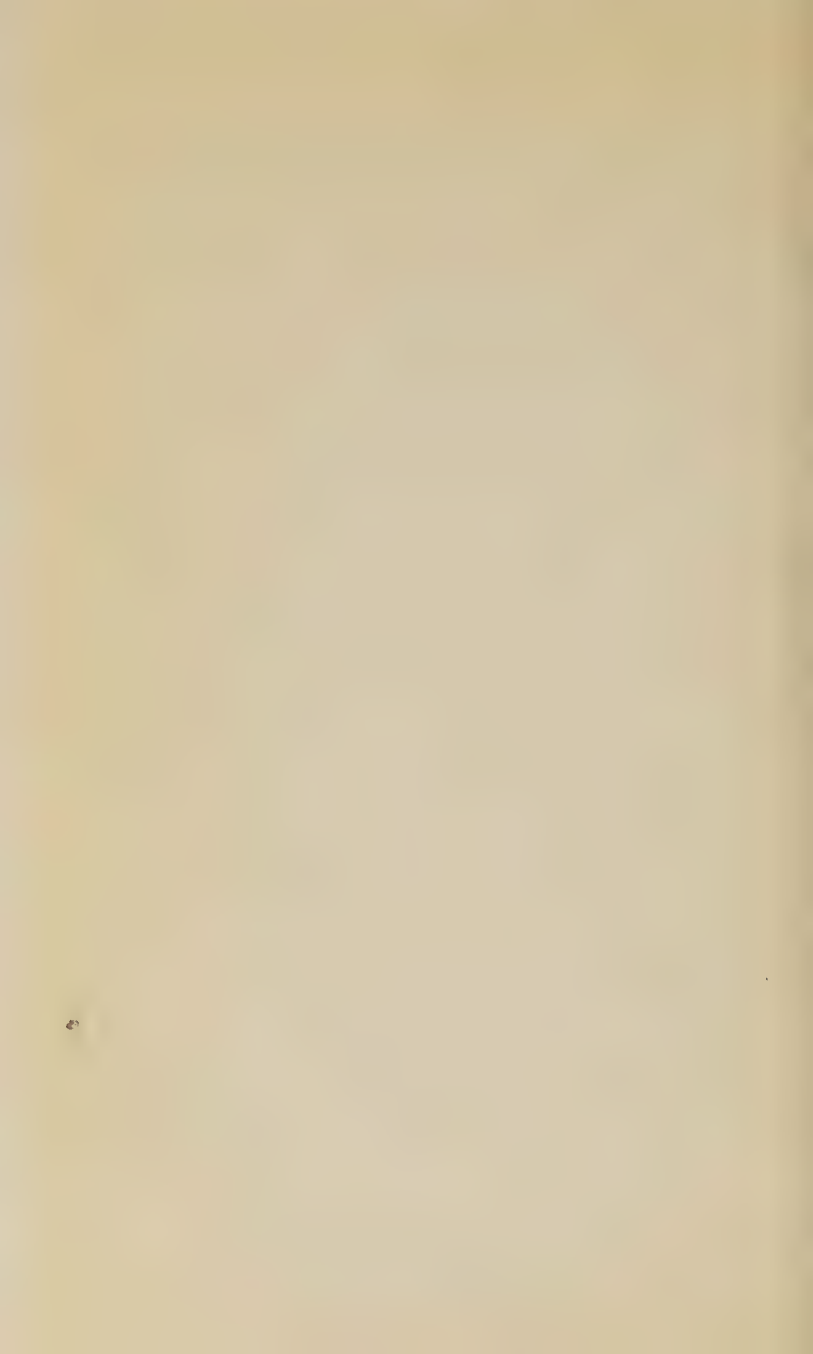
The Brabançonne in muffled tones heralded the entrance of the King and Prince Leopold by one of the end doors of the hall. Marshal Foch and General Castelnau, both wearing the Grand Cordon of the Order of Leopold, came forward and stood talking to them. It was noticed that the King and Prince Leopold were both wearing a black brassard, and *crêpe* on their sword hilts.

It was then that the group of Cardinals and Bishops joined the official personages in the great hall which was filled with the fluttering white surplices of the clergy and



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CARDINAL BOURNE AND CARDINAL DUBOIS
ENTERING THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINT GUDULE



the glitter of gold on the chasubles of the officiating priests. Canons in violet cape preceded the Nuncio who was wearing a white mitre and cape incrustated with gold. The scene was full of pomp and grandeur.

The poignant moment of that morning had come. The train from Malines, which had been signalled, had just entered the station, and the first notes of a solemn funeral march arose. The troops forming the guard of honour presented arms and all those assembled awaited in motionless silence.

While eight men were removing the heavy oak coffin from the train all the members of the Chapter of Saint Rombaut, wearing their ermine-bordered capes, came forward in procession.

The King and Prince Leopold saluted and followed the coffin which was accompanied by the Cardinals, Bishops and Apostolic Nuncio to the *chapelle ardente*, where Mgr. Micara sprinkled it with holy water before preceding it to the exit.

Outside, the Place Rogier, thronged with thousands of spectators, presented a wonderful scene of life and movement. When the coffin appeared beneath the porch profound silence ensued at once and a shudder of emotion ran through the crowd as the procession started to the muffled strains of the Brabançonne. The coffin had been placed on a very simple hearse drawn by six horses caparisoned in black. It was a striking and solemn procession, at the head of which, to the accompaniment of military bands marched detachments of troops, followed by deputations from the wounded, former combatants, volunteers with standards, and representatives from the Pontifical Zouaves marching in front of the old flag of Fleurus.¹ Then came the long procession of priests in their surplices, religious of the dif-

¹ Fleurus, in Hainault not far from the river Sambre. It was there that William III of Holland was defeated in 1690 by Marshal de Luxembourg, and the Austrians by Marshal Jourdan in 1794.

ferent Orders, Canons and Bishops. Intense emotion appeared on all faces. Behind the hearse came four nuns, the Cardinal's old valet, and Brother Hubert who had tended him with such wonderful devotion; then came the King and the Duc de Brabant with whom followed Marshal Foch.

The officiating priests formed a fringe of black chasubles round the hearse which was escorted by the Presidents of the Chamber and the Senate; the Prime Minister, Baron Rolin Jacquemyns, the Minister of the Interior, Mgr. Deploige, General Baron Michel, Monsieur Van Iseghem, President of the Court of Cassation, and Monsieur Max, the heroic Burgomaster, were the pall-bearers.

Immediately behind the King came Cardinal Bourne and Cardinal Dubois in their purple and ermine, supported by their two Marshals bearing their long trains; then followed the Auxiliary Bishops and Vicars-General; after them came the members of the late Cardinal's family in deep mourning, led by the Cardinal's sister-in-law, Madame Mercier.

Behind them an endless procession of officials, Ministers, governors, representatives of foreign learned societies, students from all the Universities with their banners, delegations of officers, political prisoners, sick and wounded.

It was nearly a quarter-past eleven before the coffin arrived within the precincts of Sainte Gudule where the impressive religious ceremonies were to take place.

The coffin was lifted on to the catafalque to the strains of the *Subvenite*, so vibrating with hope, while the company were shown into their places.

The Queen, in deep mourning, accompanied by the Duchesse de Vendôme, was conducted to the choir.

The decoration of the church was simple, and while attention had been paid to its general architectural lines this fact gave still more solemnity to the ceremonial.

The great nave up to the height of the triforium, the transept and choir were completely draped in black hangings fringed with silver. In the centre of the transept the catafalque had been placed under a canopy suspended from the arched roof. The evidence of our nothingness, as Bossuet described it, was not placed on too high a pedestal; the coffin, covered with a pall, bore the Cardinal's arms at the head, his mitre, stole and rochet. On either side stood three rows of tall candles.

In the choir the high altar was surmounted by a funereal canopy with voluminous hangings which shaded it like a huge curtain. Countless lights lit up the dark recess and two rows of candles shone like stars along the dark draperies of the choir.

The Royal Throne, draped in red velvet and veiled in *crêpe*, where the King and Queen and Prince Leopold sat, was on the Gospel side. On the Epistle side was the Archbishop's Throne of purple velvet, occupied by Mgr. Micara, the Apostolic Nuncio.

The spectacle offered by Sainte Gudule formed a majestic representation of Belgium in her association with foreign nations. In very truth the whole nation was assembled in all her living force to render supreme homage to the man who had been the firmest support of her monarchy and one of the strongest pillars of her country.

An atmosphere of immense mourning brooded over the vast assembly. The building, in spite of the great number present and the dignity of the ecclesiastics, officials and members of the army who filled it, seemed void, and from their overcharged breasts arose the sorrowful and bitter cry: "He is no more." The Holy Sacrifice would unite all their hearts in one great thought of faith and patriotic piety. As though to associate Rome more closely with Belgium the representative of the Holy See was the pontifical celebrant.

The Requiem Mass of Roland de Lassus, the Belgian

Palestrina, was rendered by the choir of Saint Rombaud under the direction of Canon Van Nuffel, their eminent choir-master. Its penetrating and soothing music lulled the grief of all who heard it and shed hope and consolation into their souls.

At the Elevation the silence was impressive and every head bowed in adoration.

At the conclusion of the Mass Mgr. Evrard, the Dean of Sainte Gudule, ascended the little pulpit which had been erected in the choir and delivered the funeral oration :

“ A profound sense of calamity and distress in all our hearts, and unqualified veneration form the dominant notes of the impressive funeral ceremonies of our revered Archbishop.

“ My brethren, death has accomplished its task, and for a moment impassible, is triumphant.

“ But his is no ordinary death, as of one who will lie in his grave to be soon forgotten; at this moment he seems to be rising from his tomb as though to protest against the inertia of death; he will live in our memories an immortal glorification of valour; and not only will he live by his work and example, but he will give life to many a soul. Heroes and saints die not.

“ What a fair and noble figure will henceforth appear over this tomb !

“ The glory of great men is often but the blaze of a moment or of a period of their lives, and their beauty is often limited to one kind or one quality of virtue; but in his case his whole career excites our admiration, and virtues of the most diverse kinds blossomed forth in his soul.” And in very simple words the preacher recalled the events of his well-filled life.

At five-thirty in the afternoon the doors of Sainte Gudule were shut on the last of those who had been defiling past the catafalque. The long coffin then appeared outside, and it was a moment to be remembered.

A death-like silence brooded over the square, while a spontaneous motion of salute was given by the thousands who formed a sombre and motionless circle around it. The moon shed a vague light over the quaint houses with their picturesque trellis-work gables; the architectural lines of Sainte Gudule made a wonderful setting for the scene; the tall figures of the mounted *gendarmes* at the salute and the dense crowd encircling the black and silver motor-hearse on which all eyes were bent.

The members forming the procession left Brussels that night. It was a long and mournful journey through the sleeping countryside, past heaths bathed in the moonlight, fields with the gleam of water showing here and there, and trees bare of leaves standing up like rows of skeletons. A few peasants recognised the motor-hearse, uncovered and crossed themselves, falling on their knees in the muddy road.

At last Malines was reached. From the tower of Saint Jean Berchmans the funeral knell tolled out its heavy monotone. People on the look-out ran to their doorsteps and as the hearse approached the Palace the numbers waiting to salute the passing of the mortal remains of the Cardinal increased in density.

And now from Saint Rombaud and from all the churches in Malines the sad notes of their tolling bells fell mingled over the city as the hearse stopped at the Archbishop's Palace.

The funeral ceremonies were less grandiose than those of the preceding day offered by the nation, but they were of a more intimate character. They took place on the following day.

Early in the morning a light drizzle had set in, and the gloom of the skies added to the sadness of the streets, where only a faint gleam of light shone through the draped street lamps.

At a quarter-past eight there were already assembled many people of distinction, and the procession was

formed. Passing through the Marché-au-Laines, Rue Stassart, Rue St. Jean, the Brist, the Marché-au-Bétail, Rue de Beffer, the Grande Place, and Rue Sous-la-Tour, it reached the Cathedral through dense masses of people packed close all the way.

On their arrival at the Cathedral the banners of those societies who had marched in front of the procession were lined up in a double row to the right and left of the entrance, musical honours were given, banners were lowered in salute, and the troops presented arms.

All the bells in the town were tolled, and shortly after, the tones of the organ preluding the absolutions mingled with the clangour.

The *Libera* was chanted and the absolutions completed by the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.

That evening, after the doors had been shut, the great flagstones at the foot of the altar were unsealed. In the vault below, into which the deceased Cardinal had translated three of his predecessors, his own coffin was laid on the Epistle side. He now lies beside Cardinal Frankenberg who also, during the unhappy days of the persecution instituted by Joseph II, had protested in the name of outraged right, and had proudly vindicated the liberties of religion and country.

Thus the Cardinal was able to be buried in his Cathedral at Malines. He had always desired this, in conformity with Christian tradition and Canonical prescription. But he was not unaware that the carrying out of his wish would clash with certain juridical and authorised enactments.

The Decree of the 23 Prairial An. XII, which is still in force in Belgium, enacts by its first Article :

“No burial shall take place in churches, buildings for worship, synagogues, hospitals, public chapels, or in general, in any enclosed edifices in which citizens gather for purposes of worship, or within the bounds of cities and market-towns.”



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THE FUNERAL PROCESSION

In Belgian law no formal exception to this prohibition exists in favour of the Royal family, Archbishops and Bishops. But an exception does in reality exist.

Since 1804, as before that date, Archbishops and Bishops, as well as members of the Royal Family, have been buried in churches. On several different occasions the Belgian Government has allowed members of the Royal Family to be buried in a church without apparently taking into consideration the illegality it was committing. Bishops too have several times been interred in their Cathedrals without any protest being raised. But in 1864, after the burial of Mgr. Delebecque in the episcopal vault, the Burgomaster of Ghent considered that he ought to offer some half-hearted protest on the score of strict legality. A short while afterwards, in 1867, the Dean of the Chapter of Malines was prosecuted for having buried the embalmed body of His Eminence, Cardinal Sterckx, in the crypt of his Metropolitan Church. The prosecution was renewed in 1872, on the death of the Bishop of Tournai. Since that time no other Bishop had been buried in the crypts of Cathedrals in Belgium.

Cardinal Mercier, in his desire to be buried in his Metropolitan Church, and not wishing that this should lead to difficulties or a prosecution, did not hesitate to put the question to the Coalition Government at the end of the year 1920 with a view to ascertaining whether there would be any objection on the part of the authorities to carrying out his wish.

The question was examined, with a willingness which was quite justifiable, by Monsieur Delacroix, and after him by Monsieur Carton de Wiart, who successively presided over the Coalition Cabinet. By their good offices, and those of M. Vandervelde, at that time Minister of Justice and Public Worship, it was put on record in an official letter addressed to the Cardinal that in exceptional cases burials had been tolerated in places

other than those laid down in the Decree of Prairial, and that no objection would be raised—very much to the contrary—“to the Cardinal, who had shed lustre on the See of Malines, being buried in his Cathedral.”

One last prayer, one last sprinkling of holy water, and that was the last goodbye.

But another life is beginning for the “Great Cardinal” as people already call him. Crowds come to Malines to kneel on the flagstones of the choir beneath which he lies, and there meditate on the greatness of the man who used up all his strength in accomplishing his duty with scrupulous thoroughness. We are overcome with admiration for a life which surpasses at so great a height our small human calculations, our littleness, and the triviality and even uselessness of our vain agitations.

Saint Rombaud at Malines has entered into history as one of those “spots where the spirit breathes”, of which Maurice Barrès spoke, where, standing between two stages of our life, it is good to come and seek after light and peace.

THE END

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

SHORTLY after the end of the war, in 1919, a Committee was formed to erect a monument in honour of Cardinal Mercier by a national subscription. One-hundred-and-forty-thousand francs had already been collected when the Governor of Brabant received the following letter, dated May 5th, 1919 :—

“CHER MONSIEUR LE GOUVERNEUR,

“The newspapers are again talking of a monument in my honour. As I have already had occasion to inform you I feel myself unable to fall in with this idea.

“Just as I am touched by the kindly sentiments extended to me, so am I opposed to its public manifestation in the manner suggested.

“And therefore I have thought it right to send the following short letter to the newspapers, of which I enclose a copy.

“I know you too well not to be sure that in reality you will understand and not be angry with me.”

The letter to the newspapers ended as follows :

“ . . . Tell them that I am unable in any sort of way to entertain the idea of erecting a monument in

my honour. Monuments are for the dead and I should not yet like to be banished from the number of the living."

After his death the Committee was re-formed to go on with the subscription again and bring to a successful issue what was ardently desired by all.

His statue was erected at Malines in its peaceful framework of picturesque streets bordered by houses venerable with age, or re-built in the old architecture of the country, close by the Cathedral, and the Palace backing on to the House of God from which it seems to take its breath.

Malines, thou art a small city whose name shall remain for ever immortal, for ever seeming a little empty now, who hadst been so full of him !

APPENDIX II

THE following graphic statement written by the Cardinal on the Conclave which elected Pope Pius XI we reproduce on account of its intrinsic interest :

“On my return to Malines on Thursday, the 16th February, 1922, among the papers left haphazard on my writing table on Wednesday, the 25th January, when I left, I found a telegram which merits a place in the Archives of the Palace : ‘Milan, 23rd January : My departure already fixed for Tuesday evening. Archbishop’s Palace at your disposal. My secretary will meet you at the station. Please state time of arrival. (Signed) Cardinal Ratti.’

“We hastened to send a grateful reply to our Eminent Colleague that we gladly accepted his hospitality, and would arrive at Milan, please God, on Thursday between ten and eleven p.m.

“The young University students were awaiting us, eager and friendly ; we were unable to tear ourselves away from their affectionate demonstrations until we had promised to go and meet them again on the morrow in their quarters.

“When we arrived at Milan we learnt that Cardinal Ratti, who had left for the Conclave on Tuesday, the 24th January, 1922, and who had taken possession of the See of St. Ambrose and of St. Charles Borromeo

on the 8th September in the previous year on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, had chosen as his motto two symbolical words : *Raptim transit*.

" When consecrated as a Bishop at Varsovie on the 28th October, 1919, Achille Ratti had included in his motto an illusion to his family name—'Ratto' in Italian means rapid, agile, and the Walloon *patois* has the word 'ratte' meaning quick—and had incorporated in his arms the white eagle of Poland.

" Did not the symbol *raptim transit* which he had chosen, taken in connection with his elevation to the See of Milan in September, 1921, assume a prophetic significance on that evening of the 24th January following when the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan left for the Conclave?

" Many put the question to themselves, and when on Sunday, the 29th, the much venerated Cardinal, who had so kindly placed his Palace at our disposal, came up to me at the Vatican to express his courteous regret that he had been unable to welcome me personally on my journey hither, and his hope to be more fortunate on my return, I could not restrain a smile and whisper in his ear, '*raptim transit*.'

" That Sunday and the three ensuing days the *Assemblées Générales Préparatoires* were being held daily by the members of the Sacred College present in Rome under the Presidency of the Cardinal Camerlengo, Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State, and Cardinal Vannutelli, Dean of the College of Cardinals. These meetings regulate current affairs during a vacancy in the Holy See, and are held for that purpose; they have no legislative powers and no authority to make any change. Legislation is held in abeyance until the next Pope is elected. This is one of the reasons why the Sovereign Pontiffs, in accordance with the conscience of the Christian world, require as prompt an election as is possible of one who, by becoming Bishop of Rome becomes from

that very fact the successor of Peter, and Vicar of Jesus Christ in the government of the Catholic Church.

“It is doubtless desirable in the highest degree that all the Cardinals, whether in Sydney or Rio de Janeiro, in Canada or the United States, should be able to take an active part in the election to which Supreme Authority summons them, but one should not lose sight of the fact that it is not for the reason that they are Bishops representing the different countries comprised within the Church that the Cardinals are summoned to the Conclave, but in their capacity as ‘titulars’ of Roman parishes, to use the traditional term. As members of the Roman clergy the Cardinals are invited to appoint a ‘titular’ to hold the Bishopric of Rome. If the one elected be a Bishop and assents to his election, he becomes at once Head of the Church; but if he is not one already the Cardinal Bishop of Ostia consecrates him a Bishop, and the Jurisdiction of Order in all its fulness is thus added to the Power of Jurisdiction acquired by his Canonical election and his acceptance thereof.

“For the space of ten days these *Assemblées Générales Préparatoires* were therefore held for the purpose of carrying on the work of administration, and to receive the messages of sympathy which were pouring in from all sides with exceptional unanimity, and in moving accents of sincerity for the memory of the late Pope, and as a form of encouragement offered to the Assembly charged with the election of his successor; to read over again to those concerned the Constitution ‘*Vacante Sede Apostolica*’ enacted by Pius X, regulating the election of the Sovereign Pontiff, and the Constitutions ‘*Commissum Nobis*’ relating to the right claimed by certain Sovereigns to veto or exclude; to exact from each of the Cardinals present an oath of fidelity to these *Prescriptiones Pontificales*, and to take all practical dispositions for organising the approaching Conclave.

“ While this was going on there were celebrated, first in the Basilica of St. Peter for six days, by the Canons of St. Peter’s, and then in the Sixtine Chapel for three days by the Sacred College, the *Novemdiales*, that is, nine consecutive funeral services for the repose of the soul of the late Pope.

“ We had the opportunity of being present at the last three. Our seniority in the Sacred College gave us the privilege and consolation of singing one of the five Absolutions at the last service. It is impossible to tell you how deeply we were moved.

THE CONCLAVE AND ELECTION

“ The mourning of the Church had ended.

“ The Cardinals were convened for next day, Thursday, the 2nd February, the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin and the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple by His Mother, to the Sixtine Chapel, where the Dean of the Sacred College was to sing a solemn Votive Mass in honour of the Holy Spirit.

“ Those present were practically the same as on the preceding days, but the outward signs of mourning had disappeared; the vestments of the Cardinals, however, were still purple; their red robes could not be seen again until after they had left the Conclave.

“ The word ‘Conclave,’ from the Latin *clavis*, designates a room locked by a key. As a matter of fact the apartments reserved for the Cardinals during the election of a Pope are kept very much closed; a Governor and a Marshal are appointed to guard the approaches to the chambers thus set apart, and the session does not begin until one or the other—the former was Mgr. Sanz de Samper, Prefect of the Sacred Palace, and the latter, Prince Chigi—has given an assurance on oath that the surroundings are completely shut off, that the door has been locked with three keys and consequently that they

may proceed *tuto et legitime*, in all security, and under the conditions prescribed by the Constitutions, to the election of the Roman Pontiff.

“The rooms allotted to those whom the language of the Protocol terms ‘Princes of the Church’ had been chosen by lot at the last Preparatory Meeting. Chance, or mischance (according to how one regards my maladroitness) had made me draw No. 44, giving me apartments which would not have distracted with envy any of the students on the third floor of our Grand Séminaire. We went up to them and came down by a break-neck staircase, pondering nevertheless with a good grace over the austere words of St. Matthew: ‘Enter ye in by the narrow gate . . . for narrow is the gate and straight the way which leadeth to eternal life.’

“The enclosed nature of the Conclave is no vain word; the Cardinals live there isolated from the world, away from noise, agitation and imaginary rivalries, an echo of which comes to our ears later on when we emerge from our cells; the rare correspondence, either written or printed, which passes the barrier, is submitted to a censorship before reaching us.

“The rule of life is monastic—recollection, silence and prayer—the soothing atmosphere of a retreat.

“The meals are of an edifying frugality and are taken in common. There is no rule of precedence; with the exception of the Dean of the Sacred College who takes his seat at the head of the table and says grace, the Cardinals sit where chance places them and have for neighbours the first comer.

“During the meal, and when they pass out to the Loggia de Raphael at its conclusion, the relations and conversation are cordial, affable and spontaneous; all are friends and brothers.

“During those joyous days when I was living among the young seminarists at Malines and Louvain, I made a point of telling them to ‘mix up together. Whether

you be Flemings or Walloons, Belgians or foreigners, town or country men, mingle together. Nothing contributes so much to self-detachment, union of hearts, humility and charity.' My colleagues in the Sacred College practised a like fraternity in a very touching manner.

"This spectacle had struck me before, in 1914. Who would have dared, at a time when Europe was on fire, when nations were rushing at one another with rage to kill, avenge, destroy, who but the Catholic Church would have dared to conceive the idea of a meeting at which the leading men from these countries at war should meet together, rub shoulders and collaborate in a work to which they must give, on their consciences, the most secret recesses of their souls? The Catholic Church dared to do this. We were convoked in August and September, 1914, to the Conclave which on September 3rd gave a successor to Pius X in the august person of Benedict XV. I remember how solemn and dignified our meetings appeared to me at that time. The relations between colleagues of different nationalities, even enemy nationalities, were deferential. We all made it a duty to raise ourselves above the heavy atmosphere in which battles were being fought; grace kept us, thank God, in the realm of the supernatural.

"Nevertheless—why should I not say so?—there was at that time the heavy breath of smoke in the air we breathed. Whether we would or not, our imaginations were haunted with sinister memories, our hearts were suffering, our minds were anxious, and their disquiet was only stifled with great difficulty.

"But on this occasion, on the contrary, relations were easy, and our hearts expanded; we all shared one hope of pacification, one need for mutual brotherliness; each and all of us experienced the same concentration of attention and desire in regard to the mission which had devolved on us, the full responsi-

bility of which we measured—that of giving to the Church a Head who should be equal to the exceptional task imposed upon him by events, a mind imbued with intrepid faith who would not allow himself to be dismayed by the multiplicity and complexity of the problems facing the new Pontiff, an apostolic heart who should respond to the cry of the multitude in distress: ‘*Domine, salva nos perimus.*’

“It would not be enough, we told each other, to choose a Pope worthy of the tiara, we must have the worthiest.

“At the request of the Sacred College, the Rev. Father Galli, Secretary of *Lettres aux Princes*, had outlined to the meeting a portrait of the kind of Pope desired by the Church.

“First and foremost we put our faith in prayer.

“From the Thursday onwards we felt ourselves to be under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin whose statue in the Pauline Chapel, a few yards from the Sistine, was brooding over the labours of the Conclave. A small lamp burned day and night before the statue of Our Lady of Good Counsel. It also guided the silent footsteps of all those who came every evening to offer to Christ in the Tabernacle and to His Mother, their good-night between eight and ten o’clock.

“On this day, the 2nd February, Mary would not forget the Vicar of her Son. She would arm him with courage to confront contradictions, and in his own person, if needs be, be transfixed with anguish and grief.

“Every day, moreover, before proceeding to the scrutiny we recited together on our knees the *Sub tuum praesidium*, and the Litanies of the Most Holy Virgin.

“But the special devotion of the Fathers of the Conclave was offered to the Holy Spirit, and here is

a striking detail; the Votive Mass, *Pro eligendo Pontifice* was not once said. Each day one public Mass was said at the beginning of the Session, and this was always the Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit, followed immediately by the *Veni Creator*, to which was added the invocation '*Emitte Spiritum tuum et creabuntur.*' Yes, *creabuntur*, the Church thinks of the renewing of all things by the 'creating' of a Pope according to the Heart of Jesus.

"The Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit was sung by the Cardinal Dean on Thursday. On that day, as on the following days, the Cardinals might celebrate Mass in private, but at the Solemn Mass of the Holy Spirit those who wished could receive Holy Communion from the hand of their Dean. Many did so, which fact accentuated in everyone the impression of their spiritual community and their life as one family.

"On Friday morning, the first Friday of February, the day devoted by Christian piety to the Sacred Heart, the voting began in the Sistine Chapel.

"Seats were placed all round, with little tables in front of each of the sixty Cardinals who had been summoned to vote, of whom fifty-three were present. In the centre was a larger table where the results of the voting were dealt with.

"A large altar where six candles were lighted faced the Assembly, and over it was a great Crucifix.

"Three examiners of the votes cast were appointed by lot, and soon they will count up and announce the results of the voting. Three *recognitores* were also chosen by lot whose mission will be to follow on afterwards and check the work of the *scrutators*. Fresh scrutators and revisers are chosen for each Session.

"There is no more serious operation in these days, my very dear brethren, or anything more deeply religious than the scrutiny that takes place in the election of a Pope.

“Call not to your minds, I beg, any feverish excitements of a political election, nor party quarrels, nor even the debates in our Parliamentary assemblies which are often stormy. Here there is no speech-making; no political programmes, no lists of candidates, save that on which each elector is on the same footing as a candidate, no threats of interpellation, no discussions at cross purposes.

“Everything takes place in the greatest calm, and there is only one witness for everyone—God and his conscience. It goes without saying that we are all anxious to enlighten ourselves and, excluding the Session of voting, we exchange information with each other, and express our opinions, our hopes and fears; but each one keeps his final conclusion to himself and inscribes it on his secret voting paper, which none other knows, nor ever will know.

“The electors go forward to the altar and place their voting paper, on which the name of the voter is hidden and sealed up, in a large bowl under the eyes of the the scrutators. The Cardinals advance in file in the order of their seniority. Each one genuflects at the foot of the altar, remains on his knees for a moment in prayer, and then reads aloud this form of oath: ‘*Testor Christum Dominum, qui me judicaturus est, me eligere, quem secundum Deum judico eligi debere.*’ ‘I call Christ, our Lord, who shall be my judge, as my witness that I am choosing him who, before God, I consider I ought to choose.’ Each Cardinal lays his voting paper on a paten, lets it fall into a bowl on the altar, salutes the Cross and retires.

“When the voting is finished the three scrutators proceed to examine the votes openly in the presence of all, and one of them calls out the results.

“So long as a candidate shall not have received two-thirds of the votes there is no election. The voting

papers are strung together and set alight at the end of each session. The crowd outside see dark smoke rising, due to the officials in attendance at the outer door, at the conclusion of the Session, having added a handful of straw and tow to the voting papers and scraps of paper on which the Cardinals, if they so choose, may have written down the number of votes given, or their own personal annotations. The black *sfumata* causes the crowd to disperse, to return again until a less dense smoke of a lighter colour, rising from the burning of the voting papers alone, shall inform them that a Pope has been elected.

"The election of Pius XI took place on Monday, the 13th February, at about eleven o'clock, at the fourteenth scrutiny, which fact caused the remark to be made to Cardinal Czernoch, Primate of Hungary, by some of his colleagues standing round him: 'See, we have made Cardinal Ratti pass the fourteen stations of the Way of the Cross, and have left him, alone, on Calvary.'

"What an impressive moment! I do not think I have ever known anything more stirring.

"Standing alone by his chair Cardinal Ratti's head was bowed in an attitude of recollection.

"The other Cardinals had left their seats and had collected in three or four circles around the one they had elected. The Cardinal Dean raised his voice and in the name of the Sacred College pronounced the formula which was to end our labours: '*Acceptasne electionem de te canonice factam in summum Pontificem?*'

"Then a silence springing from humility, awe, and, we hope, faith and trust, holds us in suspense, breathless, for two long, very long minutes.

"In a low voice came his reply, very nearly in these words: '*Ne videar divinae voluntati non plene adhaerere; ne videar oneri humeris meis imposito memet*

subtrahere; ne videar vota Eminentissimorum Patrum negligere: non obstante mea indignitate, cujus conscius sum, accepto.’ ‘Let it not seem that I do not acquiesce fully in the Divine Will; let me not flee from the burden laid upon my shoulders; let me not be held neglectful of the votes of the Most Eminent Fathers; notwithstanding my unworthiness, of which I am conscious, I accept.’

“At that very moment the Holy Spirit realises the promise made to Peter by our Divine Redeemer when, in reply to the three affirmations of his love made by the Head of the Apostolic College, Christ said to him: ‘Feed my lambs, feed my sheep.’

“When the Church ordains a priest, the imposition of hands marks the moment when the soul of the privileged one is impressed with an invisible and indelible character which makes him a priest for eternity, and assures to him the supernatural aid necessary to the accomplishment of his career.

“The Pope does not receive a sacramental character; his priesthood is that of a Bishop in which it is realised in its fullest plenitude. But the Pope receives from the Holy Spirit a power of Jurisdiction, and the investiture of an authority which extends over the whole world and is exercised in a direct and immediate way on each particular church, on each pastor and on every Christian believer.

“We took part in this conferring of powers; we heard the acquiescence of the man who, acknowledging his unworthiness but strong in the faith of the Divine Promise, replied ‘accepto.’

“At that moment, in the inmost part of my soul as a Christian and as a Pastor I made my first act of veneration, submission and all filial love to Peter living again in his 261st successor. You, my brethren, who hearken to me, priests and believers, make your renewal with us too of these sentiments.

“And the Cardinal Dean went on, ‘*Quomodo vis vocari?*’ ‘What name will you take?’

“Emotion almost stifled the Pope’s faint voice. I was unable to catch all that he said, but in substance I know it was as follows: ‘I was made a member of the Catholic Church and entered on the first stages of my ecclesiastical career in the Pontificate of Pius IX; Pius X summoned me to Rome; Pius is a name denoting peace. Therefore in my desire to consecrate my efforts to the pacification of the world, to which my predecessor Benedict XV had devoted himself, I choose the name of Pius.’

“After a pause the Pope went on: ‘I would like to add a word. I solemnly declare before the members of the Sacred College that I will safeguard and defend all the rights of the Church and all the prerogatives of the Holy See; but after saying that I should like my first benediction, as a pledge of that peace to which humanity aspires, to be not alone for Rome and Italy, but for the whole Church and the entire world. This I will give from the outside balcony of St. Peter’s.’

“The Pope then embraced, one after the other, all those who had been his colleagues an hour ago, of whom he had now become the Chief Shepherd and Father.

“I remembered that on a similar occasion I had obtained his first benediction as Pope from Benedict XV for Belgium which at that time was bleeding and grievously wounded. ‘Most Holy Father,’ I said once again, ‘deign to give your blessing to my clergy, my seminarists, my flock, our Sovereign who ere long will come and beg to be admitted to the presence of Your Holiness, and give me too your blessing.’ His Holiness warmly embraced me, and repeating the words of my request he added, ‘with all my heart.’

“Attended by the Master of Ceremonies he left the Chapel for a moment, and returned clad in his white cassock; the Cardinal Dean placed on his finger the

Fisherman's Ring. The Pope then received the first official homage of our veneration; all of us kissed his foot and his ring, and received the first *accolade* from the Father of the Catholic World. While he was embracing me he was good enough to repeat again of his own accord: 'May all good come to you, to you and your dear Belgium.'

"The crowd were impatiently waiting for the blessing from the new Pope. They were aware that the election had been made, for the *sfumata*, by its transparency this time, had told them, but they knew neither his name nor the place from which he would give his blessing. The doors of the Basilica were now closed, while on the balcony was outlined the form of Cardinal Bisleti, the senior Cardinal of the Order of Deacons, who announced to the silent crowd: '*Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum, habemus Papam Eminentissimum et Reverendissimum Dominum Achillem Ratti, qui sibi nomen imposuit: Pius XI.*'

"The white cassock of Pius XI then appeared; an indescribable outburst of '*Evviva il Papa*' broke out; the detachments of Italian soldiers presented arms; cries of joy broke out again and were redoubled, and then at a sign from the Pontiff there was instantaneously a great silence. Pius XI, in his harmonious and strong voice, then began to recite several forms of liturgical prayers, to which the crowd repeated the responses, and when these were ended he gave the Blessing in the prescribed form."

Misc. D.

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